ANNUAL REPORT

2014–2015

ocya

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND
YOUTH ADVOCATE ALBERTA

Photography in the 2014-2015 Annual Report provided by Curtis Comeau Photography. Shot on location in Calgary and Edmonton.

ocya OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE ALBERTA

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
325 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton AB T5K 2B6

Dear Mr. Speaker:

It is my privilege to submit to you the 2014-2015 Annual Report of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

The Report has been prepared in accordance with Section 21(1) of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* and covers the activities of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate for the period April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015.

Respectfully,

[Original signed by Del Graff]

Del Graff
Child and Youth Advocate

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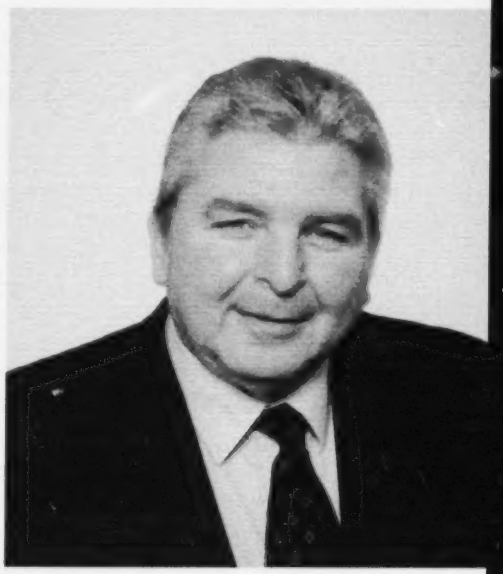
MESSAGE FROM THE ADVOCATE



The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate assists some of Alberta's most vulnerable young people. At the best of times, children and youth can find themselves and their voices marginalized, even when adults around them have the very best of intentions.

For young people who come from places of disadvantage and have experienced challenging circumstances in their lives, this risk is even more pronounced.

This past year has been one of the busiest for the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate since its establishment as an independent office of the Alberta Legislature. In addition to welcoming new faces to our office, we took on new work and broadened our activities.

We reached out to more young people and more stakeholders, through both traditional means and social media, to raise awareness about the rights of children and youth.

We raised further awareness about our office, its purpose, and its work.

We moved into a new, consolidated office in Edmonton, and undertook a significant and successful migration of our information technology systems.

We began work on a Special Report regarding the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care, which is a significant and growing concern in our province. The Special Report will make recommendations to the government, with a goal of improving the experiences that Aboriginal children and families have with the child intervention system.

Our investigative mandate expanded to review circumstances where young people have died within two years of receiving Child Intervention Services.

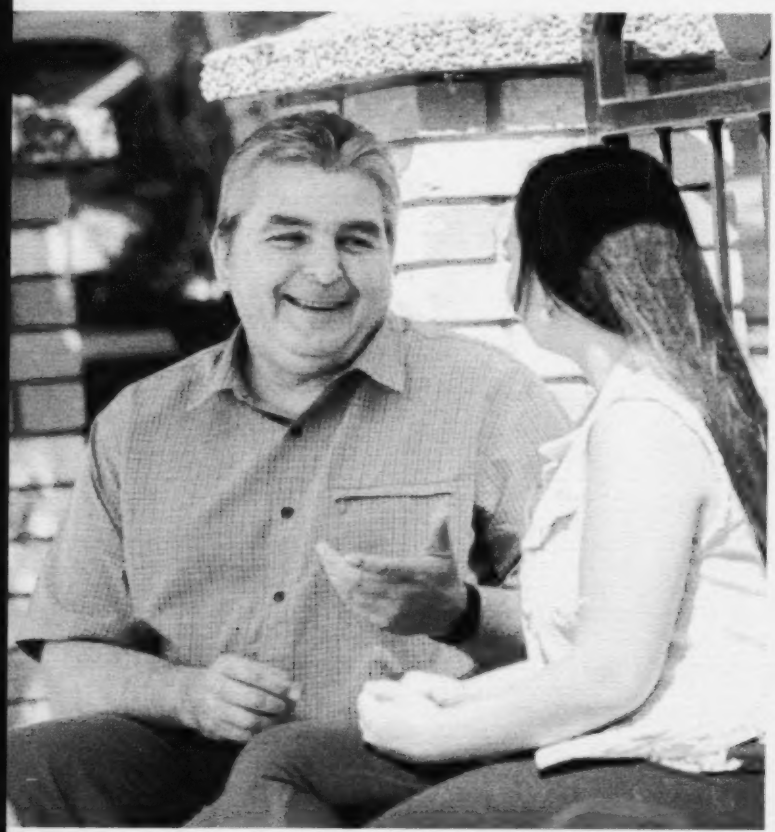
And importantly, we provided thousands of children and youth with access to advocacy and legal representation, helping ensure their rights, interests, and viewpoints are considered and acted upon.

When children and youth come to our office, they often have few places left to turn. Consequently, we know that it is not enough to simply be good at what we do. We feel an obligation, and a passionate desire to be exceptional so that we can help offer young people the best possible chance of improving their circumstances.

To this end, our office undertook organizational changes and new initiatives during the past year that are all aimed at enhancing the quality of our work and services. These initiatives will enable us to build on our areas of excellence, improve in areas where we see opportunities to do so, and embed an enduring culture of continuous improvement in all parts of the organization.

Two initiatives are particularly important to note. Our office developed an Advocacy Practice Framework to describe the key principles and considerations that guide all of our work. We also worked to become a more inclusive and welcoming environment for sexual and gender minority youth.

In the year ahead, these initiatives will take further root, including the implementation of a new Quality Assurance Framework. Over time, our goal is for this work to position our office as a leading child advocacy organization — in terms of quality, best practice, innovation, and the level of assistance we provide to the young people who need our help.



Examples of our quality focus are highlighted throughout this year's Annual Report. In keeping with the focus, this year's report also includes a dedicated section on quality assurance, which summarizes our quality-related initiatives and provides reporting on several key performance measures.

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate has at times found it challenging to fulfill its expanded investigations role while meeting the needs of Alberta's children and youth. Despite these challenges, our hard-working staff have remained dedicated to advancing the interests of young people, and for this they are to be applauded.

I also wish to commend the young people who have sought the services of our office and have assisted us during the past year. It has been our privilege to work with you in amplifying your voices and advancing your rights and interests. It is our belief that you deserve the very best — that is why we will always strive to improve the services we provide.

Our Vision

The rights, interests, and viewpoints of Alberta's vulnerable children and youth are affirmed and acted upon.

Our Mission

We represent the rights, interests, and viewpoints of Alberta children and youth who receive designated intervention services or who are involved with the youth justice system.

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE

Advancing the Rights of Alberta's Young People

In April 2012, a new era of child and youth advocacy began in Alberta with the proclamation of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*.[1] With this, Alberta's Child and Youth Advocate (the "Advocate") commenced reporting as an independent Officer of the Alberta Legislature.

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) works to advance the rights and serve the interests of young people who are receiving designated services.[2]

This includes young people who are receiving services under Alberta's *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*[3] *(the "Enhancement Act")* or Alberta's *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act*[4] *(PSECA)* or involved with the youth justice system.

The OCYA does this in several ways by:

- providing individual advocacy to young people involved with or attempting to access designated services;
- providing legal representation for child intervention court matters;
- facilitating public education and awareness-building about the rights of young people and the OCYA's role in supporting the exercise of those rights;
- developing relationships with stakeholders, including the systems and organizations that provide services to and support young people;
- identifying systemic issues that impact children and youth who are receiving services from government ministries and public systems; and
- conducting investigations in the event of the serious injury or death of a young person receiving designated services.

The OCYA provides an important "check and balance" on behalf of young people when government intervention has been necessary to ensure their safety, security, and development.

For these young people, the Government of Alberta can be making significant decisions on their behalf, and it is of utmost importance that their voices and interests are heard and considered.

A hallmark of the OCYA's vision and mission is ensuring that young people understand their rights and have every reasonable opportunity to participate in decision-making that affects them.

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1 *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, S.A. 2011, c. C-11.5.
2 "Designated services" are defined under the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*.
3 *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, RSA 2000, c. C-12.
4 *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act*, RSA 2000, c. P-30.3.

The Organization

The work of the OCYA is organized into four divisions:

Advocacy Services / Systemic Advocacy / Quality Assurance	Investigations and Legal Representation	Engagement and Education	Strategic Support

All of these divisions report to the Child and Youth Advocate.

About this Report

Each year the OCYA is required to submit an Annual Report to the Speaker of the Alberta Legislative Assembly.

The *2014-2015 Annual Report* highlights the major activities undertaken by the OCYA during the reporting period of April 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015, and outlines priorities for the year ahead.

Focusing on Quality to Better Serve Children and Youth

Children and youth do not always know how to speak up for themselves, and they do not always know they have rights that should be respected.

The children and youth served by the OCYA are often some of the most vulnerable young people living in Alberta who are in need of help, compassion, and respect. Many feel alone, misunderstood, and struggle with complex challenges. Some are unable to speak up for themselves while others are quite able to say what they need but they are not being heard. Many have few adults that they perceive as being on their side.

These young people look to the OCYA in the hopes of improving their circumstances and having their viewpoints considered when decisions are made about their lives.

In this spirit, the OCYA began to focus on inspiring quality improvement throughout the organization. This meant taking stock of the OCYA's services and processes, assessing where and how these could be improved, and exploring ways the OCYA can take the things it does well and do them even better in the future.

This quality focus was supported by an organizational change in September 2014. Responsibility for quality assurance was consolidated under the leadership of the Executive Director, Child and Youth Advocacy. This change will facilitate focus, consistency, and integration in the OCYA's quality assurance activities. It will also better enable the OCYA to comprehensively examine and assess the quality of its services and processes, and more readily identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.

ADVOCACY SERVICES

Advocacy Services is responsible for representing the rights, interests, and viewpoints of young people who are receiving services under the *Enhancement Act* or *PSECA*, and youth who are involved with the youth justice system.

Young people are referred to Advocacy Services for a variety of reasons. For example, a young person may not be feeling heard, or they may be unhappy with where they have been placed. Sometimes relatives, teachers, or foster parents contact Advocacy Services on behalf of a young person, expressing concerns that a young person's interests are not being adequately considered by the system providing care, or that the rights of a young person are not being respected.

For whatever reason they become involved, OCYA advocates work for the young people they serve. An advocate does this by working with the young person to develop and implement a plan — with the young person directing the advocacy. In cases where the young person is unable to direct the advocacy (due to age or significant capacity issues), the advocate develops and implements a plan based on the young person's interests — not what someone else thinks are their "best interests." In this way, the role of an OCYA advocate is distinct from other adults who are involved with these young people and can be characterized by the following statements.

- An advocate works for young people and only for young people.
- An advocate's job is to listen to young people and help them to improve their situation.
- Young people can decide if they can work with their advocate, or if they want a different one.
- Young people can decide how much information to give to their advocate.
- An advocate's job is not to determine what is best for a young person. There are others who have that job, like caseworkers and judges. An advocate will listen to young people and help them figure out ways to talk to those who are in charge.

Advocates work for young people and young people must have faith that their interests come first. An advocate must be independent of government systems so they can be free to speak out when required.

The OCYA appreciates...

...the **Edmonton Region Placement Resource Assessment Team (PRAT)** for their excellence in assessing concerns involving placement resources (e.g., foster homes, group homes). This team has excelled in providing timely and thorough assessments. Their focus is always on ensuring the well-being of children and they go to great lengths to explore, understand, and communicate what is happening for a child when concerns arise.

Key Activities in 2014-2015

Responding to Young People

In 2014-2015, a total of 2,526 young people were served by individual advocacy services through screenings, information gathering, or working on advocacy issues with an advocate. This represents a year-over-year decrease of eight per cent in the total number of young people served. Compared to 2013-2014, the number of young people served decreased across all age groups, with the largest decreases among young people aged 6-11 years (10 per cent), and those aged 12-17 years (14 per cent). The exception was young people aged 18 years and older, with 12 per cent more young people from this age group being served.

Young people aged 12-17 years continued to be those served most frequently by Advocacy Services, representing 40 per cent of all young people served.

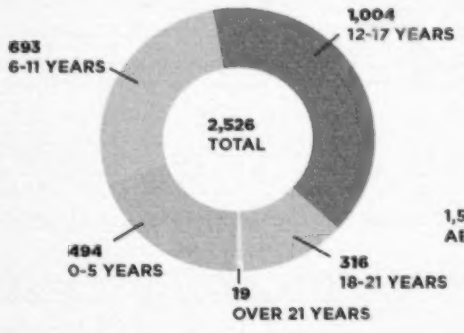
Aboriginal young people comprise almost 60 per cent of the young people served by Advocacy Services. This is consistent with the total child intervention caseload of the province (i.e., children ages 0-17 years receiving services in care and not in care).

During 2014-2015, there were 24 per cent fewer mandatory notifications to Advocacy Services, compared to the previous year. Caseworkers in Alberta's child intervention system are required to notify the OCYA and the Statutory Director[5] using the "Mandatory Notification to the Child and Youth Advocate" form when certain situations arise.[6] The OCYA is exploring the reasons concerning the decrease in mandatory notifications with Human Services and their service delivery partners.

Third-party referrals remained the most common pathway by which young people were referred to Advocacy Services. Almost half (49 per cent) of all young people served in 2014-2015 were referred by third parties. The number of self-referrals increased by five per cent, compared to 2013-2014.

2014-2015

AGES OF YOUNG PEOPLE SERVED



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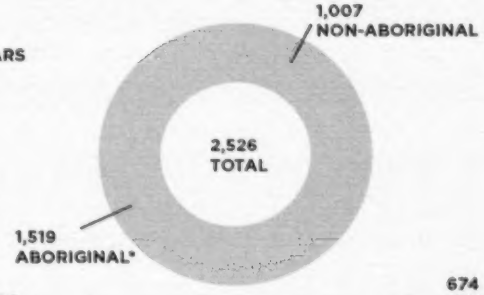
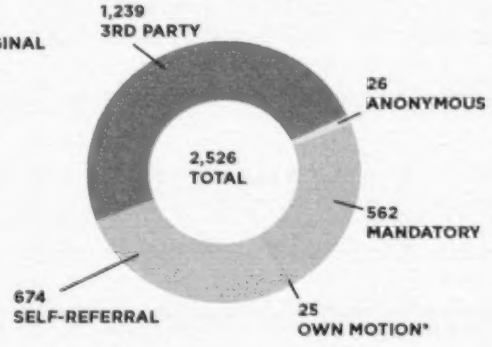


* *Aboriginal includes young people identified as First Nations, Inuit, Métis, "Non-Status," "potential to be registered," and "unknown Aboriginal group."*

REFERRAL SOURCES OF YOUNG PEOPLES SERVED



* *Own Motion referrals are those initiated by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.*

5 Statutory Director refers to the Director as per the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*.

6 A mandatory notification must be made in the following situations: allegations of abuse in care, competing points of view, unmet needs, and youth disagrees with a significant decision.

Improving the Reporting of Advocacy Issues

When an advocate works with a young person, the advocate is required to record a young person's advocacy issue(s) from an established list of categories in an OCYA data management system. This information is used for tracking and reporting advocacy issues. Some examples of advocacy issues include the lack of participation that a young person has in decisions affecting them, concerns expressed by a young person about the care or support they are receiving, or the lack of connections they have to family.

During 2014-2015, a review of individual advocacy issues was undertaken by an advocate-led committee, with participation from OCYA employees involved in data analysis, research, and information technology (IT). The review helped ensure that issues for youth involved in the youth justice system are adequately represented.

Improving Connections with Youth in the Youth Justice System

Through the OCYA's experience, it has become apparent that youth in the justice system are less likely to contact the OCYA and ask for support (as compared to youth in the child intervention system). Youth in the youth justice system tend to have fewer supports around them who could contact the OCYA on their behalf. Often times, youth who are in custody do not see themselves as having rights or having any say in their situations. Some young people are fearful that their situations might worsen if they speak with an advocate; others are not aware of how an advocate might be able to assist them.

Consequently, Advocacy Services has identified a need to reach out to youth in custody. Advocates now attend youth custody centres on a regularly scheduled basis, to undertake information sessions with young people. These sessions are aimed at helping youth understand their rights and how advocates can assist them. Afterwards, OCYA advocates will meet with youth individually to discuss their situations. Advocates also meet with managers and supervisors at the youth custody centres to discuss issues raised by young people, to stay informed about what is happening in the centres, and to provide information about the OCYA.

Looking Ahead

Advocacy Services is reorganizing to better respond to young people in all areas of the province. The OCYA's north office will make adjustments to the jurisdictions covered by advocates. Each advocate will be responsible for providing services to young people in Edmonton and young people in an assigned rural location. Similar adjustments will be made in the OCYA's south office.

Advocacy Services will also place a focus on:

- looking for creative and innovative advocacy strategies;
- exploring best practices for gathering information from children under 12 years of age about their experiences with Advocacy Services, and determining how best to use this information in advocating for young people in this age range; and
- continuing to coordinate and manage work on systemic issues.

SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

Systemic advocacy is about working towards broad changes that will benefit young people now and into the future. The OCYA's systemic advocacy efforts are focused on improving circumstances for young people who are receiving designated services. Realizing such improvements often requires changes to legislation or government policy.

The OCYA employs several approaches in its systemic advocacy efforts. These include undertaking Special Reports on issues pertinent to children and youth, reaching out through media on issues affecting young people, and conducting Investigative Reviews following the death or serious injury of a young person receiving designated services.

Where possible, the OCYA involves young people in its advocacy efforts. Young people are often best placed to speak about the impacts of government policies and services, and their voices can be powerful in delivering messages to key decision-makers.

Involvement in systemic advocacy can also be very positive and empowering for young people. Recently, the OCYA was visited by a young woman who had been in care and had received advocacy services. When transitioning out of care, the young woman struggled due to a lack of support. With the help of an advocate, she and other young people spoke up. A passionate child intervention manager heard their concerns, and changes were subsequently made to the region's policy (and later to provincial policy) concerning the support provided to young people. This young woman now speaks proudly of her role in making changes that will benefit other young people. Her future plans include attending the University of Alberta.

Systemic advocacy work often involves connecting and collaborating with others. The OCYA works hard to foster and maintain positive relationships with many individuals and organizations. The OCYA has many allies in its systemic advocacy work, including those who work within systems that deliver services to children and youth. They share the common goal of improving circumstances for young people who are receiving their services, and many welcome the opportunity to be involved in bringing about such improvements.

Key Activities in 2014-2015

Coordinating Systemic Advocacy

All parts of the OCYA participate in some form of systemic advocacy. Recognizing this reality, an organizational shift was made during 2014-2015 to move responsibility for systemic advocacy to the Executive Director of Child and Youth Advocacy. This change will facilitate greater ease of participation in, and coordination of, systematic advocacy activities throughout the organization.

Working to Improve Circumstances for Young People

Some of the major systemic advocacy initiatives include the release of Investigate Review reports, the commencement of a Special Report on Aboriginal young people in care, and the hosting of a Mental Health Symposium. These advocacy initiatives are discussed throughout the Annual Report.

Other highlights of the OCYA's systemic advocacy work in 2014-2015 include the following.

OCYA Youth Advisory Panel — In spring 2014, the Youth Advisory Panel met with the Minister of Human Services, Manmeet Bhullar, to discuss their experiences and suggest changes to child intervention in Alberta. The panel members spoke about the importance of being placed with siblings, and the need to be supported into early adulthood (i.e., beyond 22 years of age). Members of the Panel felt heard by the Minister because the government made changes to extend support to young people past 22 years of age. The Panel also met with Dr. Cindy Blackstock, a member of the Gitxsan Nation, to learn about a matter she brought to the attention of the federal Human Rights Tribunal concerning First Nations children. Dr. Blackstock is a prominent activist for child welfare and the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. The youth also participated in "Have a Heart Day" and sent hearts with messages to Prime Minister Harper in support of the rights of First Nations children.

Social Media — The OCYA made extensive use of Twitter and Facebook to raise awareness about issues of importance to children and youth. Notably, social media was employed to help celebrate Aboriginal cultures, promote the OCYA's participation at the Edmonton Mayor's Pride Brunch, and highlight the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Service Delivery Reports — On a biannual basis, the OCYA meets with, and provides a report to, each Child and Family Service region (CFS) and Delegated First Nation Agency (DFNA). These reports summarize activity that the OCYA has had with young people and stakeholders from each CFS and DFNA jurisdiction, and identifies existing systemic issues. Some issues are concentrated in one or two jurisdictions, while others exist throughout the province in First Nation communities and Métis settlements. Staff of the OCYA meet with representatives of each CFS and DFNA, and the Ministry of Human Services (the "Ministry") to discuss the service reports and the identified systemic issues.

Identifying Systemic Issues

Systemic issues are those issues that:

- affect more than one person;
- if not addressed, are likely to re-occur; and
- typically require a change to policy, regulation or legislation to resolve.

The OCYA becomes aware of systemic issues affecting young people through a variety of mechanisms, that include:

- hearing directly from young people or from their families;
- being advised by a young person's service delivery team or by staff of an agency assisting a young person; and
- learning from young people, stakeholders, and others in the course of engagement and outreach activities.

In addition, the OCYA's day-to-day work provides a source of information about issues affecting young people by:

- reviewing issues that are affecting or have affected a young person, the office is always considering whether other young people might be affected by the same issues;
- tracking of advocacy issues that alerts the OCYA of the extent to which certain issues are affecting young people; and
- learning through the Investigative Review process about a young person's experience in receiving designated services and the identification of systemic issues.

Importantly, the OCYA does not wait for young people to be negatively affected before acting on systemic issues. The OCYA works proactively, stays informed about changes being made to designated services, and responds quickly if it believes young people may be negatively affected by issues.

Following Up on Recommendations

Twice per year, the OYCA follows up on systemic issues identified by the Advocate and the progress achieved on recommendations made by the Advocate in Investigative Reviews and Special Reports. In 2014-2015, recommendations were made to the Ministry, Alberta Health Services, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, and the Alberta College of Pharmacists.

The Ministry provided updates on progress made on recommendations in three Investigative Review reports and the OCYA's Special Report on youth aging out of care "Where do we go from here?" The Ministry did not respond to the recommendations made in Baby Annie (released in April 2014) and Baby Dawn (released in August 2014).

The OCYA appreciates...

...the **Mahmawi-atoskiwin program** for their commitment to family wellness and for connecting the Aboriginal community to cultural and natural supports. Their use of various Elders in the community, promoting culture through the regular use of the sweat lodge and other ceremonies, and their new cultural healing camps for families strengthen the Aboriginal community in the Calgary area. Mahmawi-atoskiwin is an alliance of Boys ..nd Girls Clubs of Calgary, Enviros, and Pathways Community Service Association.

Outstanding Systemic Issues

The Ministry has provided limited information on the progress made to address systemic issues noted in the Provincial Overview of the OCYA Service Reports. There are outstanding systemic issues concerning the child intervention system from previous Annual Reports in the areas of:

- disproportionate number of Aboriginal children in care;
- capacity-building through rights education;
- tracking, analyzing, and learning from Mandatory Notifications;
- insufficient use of historical information to inform decision-making;
- connection to family and communities;
- addressing neglect specifically;
- permanency for young people in permanent care; and
- placements for young people in care.

These outstanding systemic issues from previous Annual Reports will be considered in our work (Investigative Reviews, Special Reports, and public education). The OCYA will deploy its resources in different ways to bring the necessary attention to these issues by those who are in a position to make changes.

While overall there has been progress, there continues to be a number of outstanding recommendations and ongoing systemic issues in Alberta's child intervention system. The responses and the progress made in addressing systemic issues and recommendations identified by the Advocate are posted on the OCYA's website at www.ocya.alberta.ca.

Performance Measure	Last Actual 2013-2014	Target 2014-2015	Actual 2014-2015
All recommendations are followed up on with the respective systems within six months and are reported on by the Child and Youth Advocate.	100%	90%	100%

Looking Ahead

In the year ahead, the OCYA will build on the organizational changes made in 2014-2015 to enhance coordination of systemic advocacy throughout the organization. The OCYA will also undertake its systemic advocacy work to increase opportunities for young people to be involved in these efforts. As those who stand to be most impacted, children and youth have powerful roles to play in advocating for changes to Alberta's child intervention system. Engaging their voices will be an important part of the OCYA's efforts to bring about improved circumstances for young people in the province.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The OCYA provides services to some of Alberta's most vulnerable citizens. With this in mind, it is vital that the organization is accountable and always working to improve the quality and effectiveness of its services. To this end, the OCYA carefully tracks, monitors, and reports on its work and processes.

Several quality assurance activities are currently in place at the OCYA. Many of these were developed to meet specific needs. For example, we developed youth surveys to gather input from youth about their experiences with an OCYA advocate or LRCY lawyer. This input is used to help assess the quality and effectiveness of the advocacy and legal representation services provided by the OCYA.

Key Activities in 2014-2015

Bringing Integration and Focus to Quality Assurance

Previously, quality assurance at the OCYA has been managed and performed within the organization's divisions. This has at times resulted in quality assurance competing for time and resources with other important work priorities in the divisions. A decision was made during 2014-2015 to consolidate quality assurance under the leadership of the Executive Director, Child and Youth Advocacy. The Quality Assurance unit will focus on data analysis, program evaluation, and performance management to continuously improve quality of services.

This organizational change has enabled the OCYA to bring a focus to quality assurance, with dedicated people and resources leading the quality charge. Being operationally distinct from the divisions will also bring greater objectivity to quality assurance throughout the OCYA.

Building the Advocacy Practice Framework

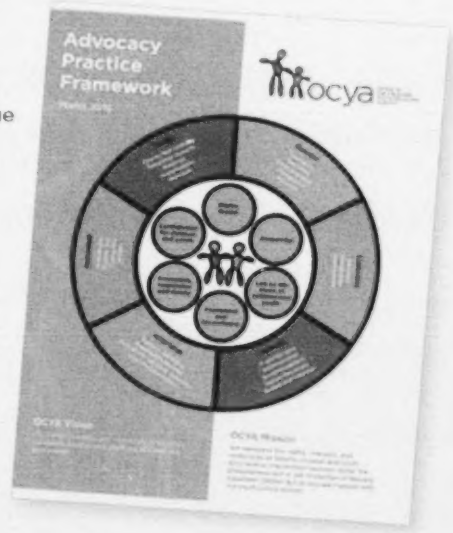
In May 2014 following consultation with our staff, the OCYA introduced an Advocacy Practice Framework. The framework was introduced to provide both staff and stakeholders with a common understanding of the work of the OCYA. The framework is also a tool with which to monitor our current practices, and to guide improvements and the development of new practices.

The framework is built upon six principles with young people at the center of our work and affirms that the advocacy of the OCYA:

- promotes and secures the rights and interests of children and youth;
- is led by the views of children and youth;
- is accessible, responsive, and timely;
- is respectful;
- is consistent and accountable; and
- ensures confidentiality for children and youth.

All the work of the OCYA is a form of advocacy with or on behalf of young people and this work crosses three continuums.

1. **Direct – Indirect**: Some work is direct advocacy, such as meeting with young people in focus groups or individually, while other work is indirect and happens behind the scenes and includes for example, ensuring that there are accommodations to provide services and research to support the work of the office.
2. **Individual – Collective**: Some of our advocacy focuses more on individuals, most often young people, including those who call our office requesting services, while some advocacy focuses more collectively on groups of young people, such as the Special Report on the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care.
3. **Prevent – Intervene**: Some of our advocacy can be considered preventative, such as providing rights education, while on the other end of this continuum our advocacy involves intervening after an issue has been identified for a young person, or in circumstances where a child is assigned a lawyer for a matter under the *Enhancement Act*.



One concept that is integral to this framework is balance. To ensure that the advocacy we do with and on behalf of young people living in Alberta is effective, we must ensure that our efforts are balanced across the three continuums and are guided by our principles. A copy of the Advocacy Practice Framework is available on our website at www.ocya.alberta.ca.

Developing a New Framework for Quality

In 2014-2015, the OCYA began developing a Quality Assurance Framework with the help of outside experts. Once the framework is finalized, it will be used to develop a Quality Assurance Implementation Plan that will provide the OCYA with a solid foundation to ensure service quality now and into the future.

Currently, the OCYA undertakes numerous activities aimed at ensuring accountability and assessing the quality of its services. These include monitoring standards for LRCY lawyers and OCYA advocates, undertaking youth surveys, and conducting evaluations of public education sessions.

The Quality Assurance Implementation Plan will build upon these and other existing quality assurance activities in the OCYA, and will help support a culture where everyone shares responsibility for quality and continuous improvement.

Maintaining Quality in Advocacy and Legal Services

For over five years the OCYA has had standards in place for advocates and for LRCY lawyers, which establish the minimum levels of service that young people should expect to receive. The standards help safeguard children and youth assisted by the OCYA, and help ensure these young people receive quality services.

On an annual basis, advocacy files are reviewed by independent contractors. LRCY lawyer files are reviewed by independent contractors one year after the lawyer is accepted onto the roster, and every two years thereafter. All of these file reviews are conducted to determine compliance with the OCYA's standards.

The overall results of monitoring are tabulated and two reports are prepared: an Advocacy Services Monitoring Report and an LRCY Monitoring Report.

File reviews for 2014-2015 are currently underway. Once completed, the associated monitoring reports will be posted on the OCYA's website.

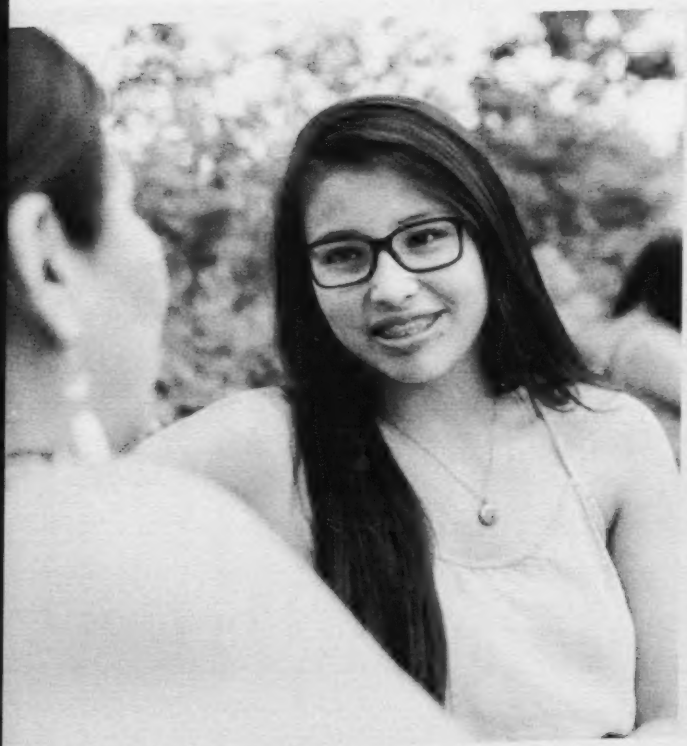
Meeting Advocacy Standards

To ensure that young people receive quality services, the OCYA maintains standards for its advocates. The standards represent what is minimally expected of an advocate in providing services to a young person. On an annual basis, independent contractors review all closed files to ensure compliance with the advocacy standards. Results of these reviews are posted on the OCYA's website at www.ocya.alberta.ca.

Standards are in place that address:

- responsiveness to referrals;
- face-to-face contact with young people;
- information gathering;
- rationale to terminate involvement after information gathering or to provide advocacy services;
- decision and rationale as to whether or not advocacy will be directed by the young person;
- responsiveness to develop an advocacy plan;
- involvement of young people in planning; and
- recorded activity minimally every 60 days.

This is the sixth consecutive year that the OCYA has monitored its compliance to advocacy standards.



The OCYA appreciates...

...the **Aboriginal Interagency Committees of Northwest Alberta** for their work in the Aboriginal community to promote awareness, identify issues, lobby for resolution, and provide agencies and government bodies with feedback on Aboriginal perspectives. Through their process, they have strengthened communication with service providers and evolved into a group who are focused on enriching the lives of Aboriginal people. The committees use a collaborative and holistic approach that embraces both culture and history to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people living in northwest Alberta. The committees meet monthly, from September through June, and encourage service providers who work with Aboriginal people and community members to attend. Meetings are held in Peace River, High Prairie, High Level, and Grande Prairie.

Advocacy Service Standards

	Compliance Rate 2013-14	Target
Standard 1 Responsiveness to referrals	99%	80%
Standard 3* Face-to-face contact with young people	89%	80%
Standard 4 Promptness of information gathering	96%	85%
Standard 5 Duration of information gathering	78%	85%
Standard 6 Documentation of rationale for whether or not advocacy services are provided	99%	100%
Standard 7 Documentation of whether advocacy will be directed by the young person and rationale	94%	100%
Standard 8 Decision on whether the young person will direct advocacy is consistent with policy	91%	80%
Standard 9A Responsiveness to develop an advocacy plan when advocacy is directed by young person	98%	80%
Standard 9B Responsiveness to develop advocacy plan when young person is not able to direct advocacy	97%	80%
Standard 10 Involvement of the young person in planning	95%	90%
Standard 11 Activity recorded every 60 days at minimum	82%	80%

**Standard 2 was discontinued shortly after the standards were implemented.*

We exceeded our targets on eight of the eleven Advocacy Service Standards.

Compliance for Standards 5, 6, and 7 were below target and work is currently underway to improve the results of these standards.

"The base belief that all human beings have dignity calls us to recognize how we are woven together. I love a systems view of why it is important to hear young people. With all voices heard and acknowledged, we achieve a strengthening of both our children and of ourselves... the large self to which all of us belong. That's powerful enough for all of our futures."

- Lynn L. King, Executive Director and Registrar at Alberta College of Social Workers

LRCY Service Standards

	Compliance Rate 2013-14	Target
Standard 1A Reporting indicates face-to-face contact with each young person before making submissions to the court	93%	95%
Standard 1B Reporting indicates a contact with each young person after the final court date	85%	95%
Standard 2 Reporting indicates the lawyer gathered and examined all relevant information	100%	95%
Standard 3 Reporting indicates the young person's views and preferences were before the court	72%	75%
Standard 4 Reporting indicates the appointed lawyer personally attended all hearings of substance	99%	95%
Standard 5 Reporting indicates the lawyer advised the young person of his/her procedural rights	71%	75%
Standard 6 Invoices are received in a timely manner	82%	90%

We exceeded our targets on Standards 2 and 4 and have seen a steady gain on Standards 1A, 1B, 3, and 5, though compliance on these standards remain below target. Compliance on Standard 6 fell over the past year and is now below our target.

In the coming year, both the Advocacy and LRCY Service Standards and targets will be reviewed. We will be considering ways to increase compliance on those standards where there is room for improvement and we will adjust the targets on those where compliance is consistently exceeded.

The OCYA appreciates...

...the **Blackfoot Culture and Language program**, a joint venture between Kainai Children Services (Blood Tribe) and Southwest Child and Family Services, for maintaining a connection and developing cultural identity for their children and members who are in foster care within the southwest area of Alberta. In 2007, Kainai Children Services recruited a Program Coordinator to work with children and their foster families; the program commenced in 2008. Since then, the program has expanded to provide cultural training/ competencies for their staff, resulting in a better connection with the families and community they serve.

Gathering Feedback to Inform and Improve Services

While the OCYA works with many adults in other organizations and government systems, the OCYA's clients are children and youth. With the aim of continuously improving, the OCYA reaches out to young people to hear about the services they have received. Once an LRCY lawyer or an advocate has completed their services to a young person, an independent contractor conducts a telephone survey with that young person[7] to hear about their experiences. Comments provided by young people are shared with their lawyer or advocate in a non-identifying manner. The lawyers and advocates working with the OCYA have said they appreciate and place a high level of importance on this feedback.

Performance Measure	Last Actual 2013-2014	Target 2014-2015	Actual 2014-2015
Percentage of youth, 12 years of age and over, that indicate they are satisfied with their legal representation.	90%	85%	82%

In 2014-2015, 90 youth were contacted about their experiences with 39 roster lawyers. The youth were asked, "Were you happy with the legal services you received from your lawyer?" 82 per cent of youth responded positively; this is a decrease from 90 per cent in the previous reporting period.

What young people have to say about their lawyer...

"My experience was great. She helped me a lot. It was neat to have a say in the issue at hand."

"My lawyer always asked a lot of questions of me to make sure he told the judge what I wanted. He encouraged me to stay strong. Checked in. Absolutely outstanding. I really enjoyed him."

"Is really great at explaining things for me and my brother and if we didn't understand she kept finding different ways to explain it to us."

"He hardly talked to me. Talked to social services more than he did us. Bugged me a lot. Spoke to us like we were kids."

"Seemed like the lawyer was against me. Court went on for so long because the lawyer didn't know how to say what I wanted."

"It was cool to have someone say what I want without having to be in court."

"A straight forward guy, honest, and when he doesn't know an answer he always calls back with the correct answer."

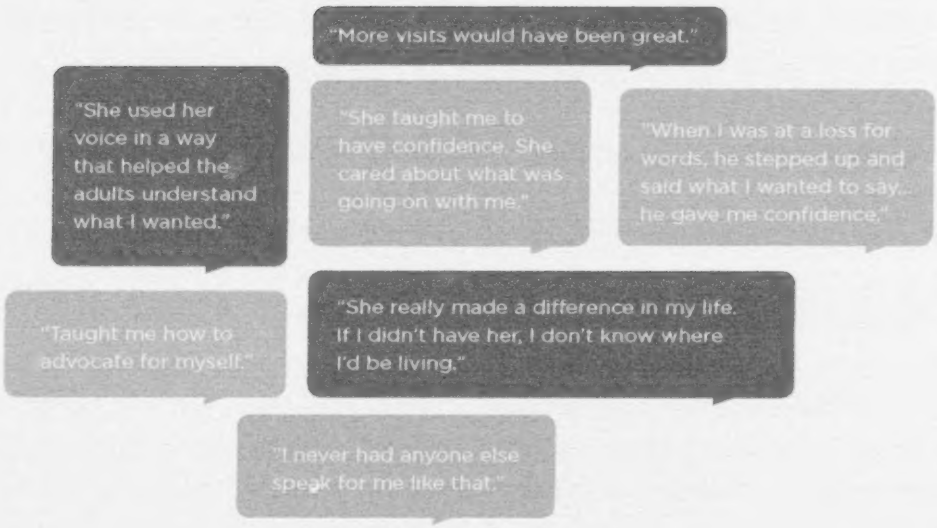
7 For youth who are 12 years of age and older.

Similarly, an independent contractor conducts telephone interviews with young people[8] shortly after they receive services from an advocate, to gather feedback about their experiences. This reporting period marked the second year in which the OCYA has used a telephone interview process to gather input about advocacy services, rather than using a mail-back response survey. For 2014-2015, the interview process had a 32 per cent response rate,[9] an increase from 25 per cent in the previous year. This clearly indicates that the shift to a telephone interview process netted greater responses. In prior years, during which a mail-in survey was used, the response rate was less than 10 per cent.

Information gathered through the survey is used to improve advocacy practices and to inform ongoing policy development. It is also used to monitor the quality of Advocacy Services from young people's perspectives on two OCYA performance measures. In 2014-2015, the OCYA exceeded its targets for both of these measures.

Performance Measure	Last Actual 2013-2014	Target 2014-2015	Actual 2014-2015
Percentage of youth who indicate that their advocate listened to them and represented their viewpoints.	97%	85%	97%
Percentage of youth who were satisfied that their advocate made a positive difference for them.	95%	85%	98%

What young people have to say about their advocate...


"More visits would have been great."
"She used her voice in a way that helped the adults understand what I wanted."
"She taught me to have confidence. She cared about what was going on with me."
"When I was at a loss for words, he stepped up and said what I wanted to say... he gave me confidence."
"Taught me how to advocate for myself."
"She really made a difference in my life. If I didn't have her, I don't know where I'd be living."
"I never had anyone else speak for me like that."

8 For youth who are 12 years of age and older.

9 Percentage of young people who participated in the telephone interview out of all those who were eligible.

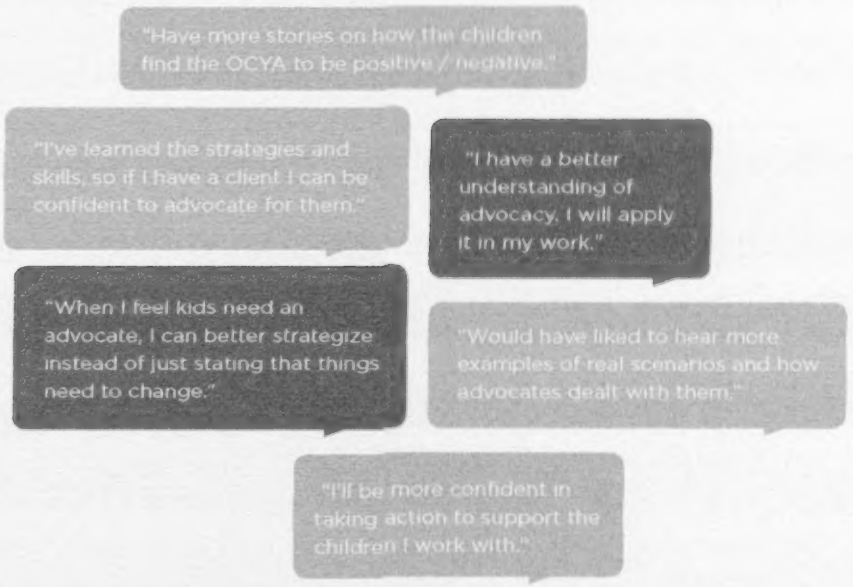
Enhancing the Effectiveness of Public Education

The OCYA uses evaluations at its presentations and workshops to gather feedback from participants. These evaluations help the OCYA determine whether its public education activities are providing audiences with useful and easily understood information that educates them about both young people's rights and the role of the OCYA. The input received in these evaluations is used to strengthen and improve presentations and workshops, with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of the OCYA's public education activities.

Performance Measure	Last Actual 2013-2014	Target 2014-2015	Actual 2014-2015
Percentage of stakeholders that indicate they were more informed of the role of the OCYA and the rights of young people, after attending a public education session.	93%	85%	97%

During 2014-2015, the OCYA gathered feedback from a number of presentations. In the completed evaluations, 98 per cent of participants felt the presentation or workshop was informative and useful. Ninety-three per cent felt that they would know what to do if they felt they needed, or knew a youth who could benefit from, the services of the OCYA. Ninety-seven per cent of participants stated that they were more informed about the OCYA and the rights of young people after attending the session.

What participants have to say about their OCYA Public Education Session...


"Have more stories on how the children find the OCYA to be positive / negative."
"I've learned the strategies and skills, so if I have a client I can be confident to advocate for them."
"I have a better understanding of advocacy, I will apply it in my work."
"When I feel kids need an advocate, I can better strategize instead of just stating that things need to change."
"Would have liked to hear more examples of real scenarios and how advocates dealt with them."
"I'll be more confident in taking action to support the children I work with."

In 2014-2015, the OCYA began piloting evaluations for awareness sessions that it provides to youth justice audiences. A feedback survey was customized to be youth-friendly and understandable by young people at a range of reading levels. All of the participants indicated that they understood more about how an advocate can help them have their rights, interests, and viewpoints heard.

Performance Measure	Last Actual 2013-2014	Target 2014-2015	Actual 2014-2015
Percentage of youth involved in the youth justice system that attend OCYA awareness and outreach sessions say they better understand how an advocate can assist them in having their rights, interests, and viewpoints heard by decision makers.	N/A	85%	100%

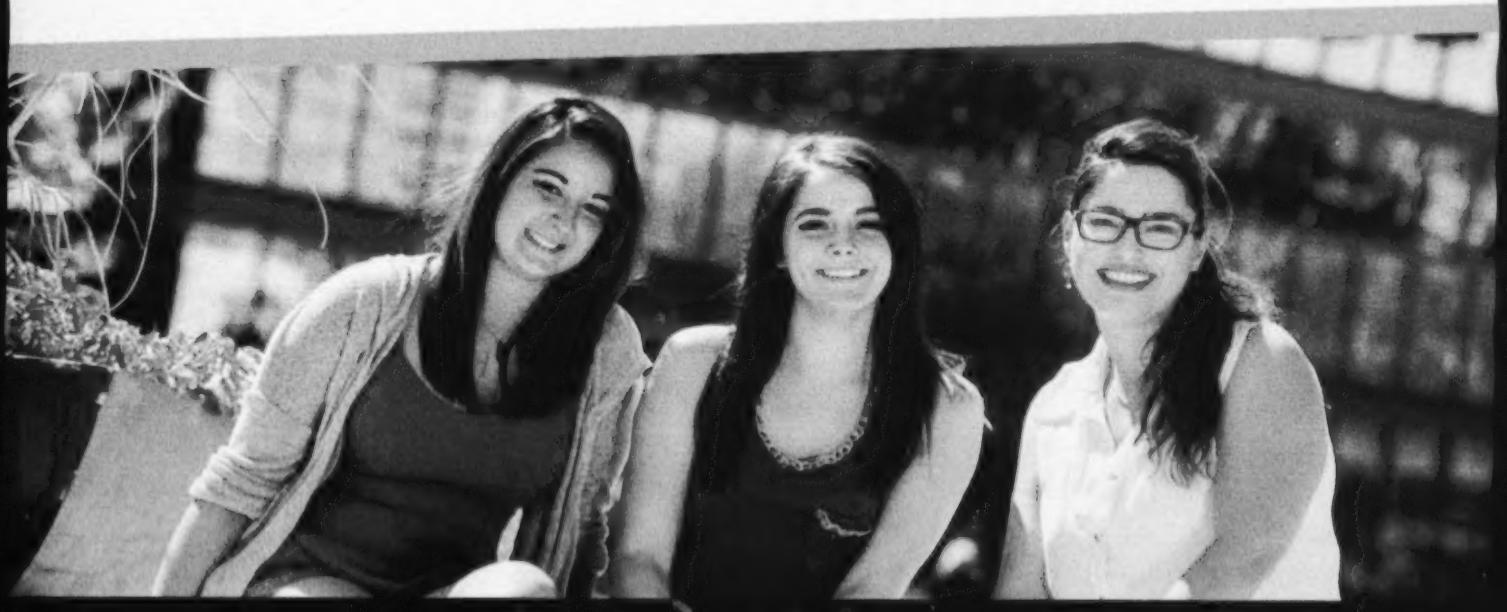
Looking Ahead

The new work on quality improvement will continue in the upcoming year. Staffing of the new Quality Assurance unit will be completed with a manager, two analysts, and a research specialist rounding out the unit. The new Quality Assurance Framework and Quality Assurance Implementation Plan are also expected to be finalized, which when complete, will be implemented.

The OCYA will be reviewing the standards that have been in place for several years as well as the OCYA's performance measures to determine their overall effectiveness in ensuring quality of services. As a part of this review, targets will be examined and in some cases, new targets developed or existing ones raised.

The OCYA will also continue to participate with other provincial and territorial child advocates in the development of national child advocacy standards. At the same time, we remain committed to providing advocacy to young people that meets or exceeds what is provided in other provinces and jurisdictions.

An ongoing focus on quality will enable the OCYA to maintain its areas of excellence, become better in areas where it can, and explore new and promising practices that will bring about enduring quality improvements.



STAFF REFLECTIONS

"What inspires you to improve the quality of your work?"...

MERCEL WILLIAMS

Administrative Assistant

As an Administrative Assistant, I work within a sensitive client-focused environment to provide a variety of complex administrative support functions to the Investigations and Legal Representation division. My role emphasizes accuracy, time management, and attention to detail. Every day is a unique experience. I have frequent contact with stakeholders (children, youth, lawyers, and the general public) via the phone and/or face-to-face.

My passion for my work aids in the delivery of quality services. I practice service above self in helping others at work. I recall being a member of a service organization; one of its annual themes was "mankind is our business." That theme holds true for me today, and I have embraced that theme throughout my employment tenure. We must try to make a difference in someone else's life every day, especially vulnerable children and youth. In a recent phone conversation, a youth said to me, "I just called again to say thank you for helping me." That made my day – knowing that a small gesture can produce a significant difference in someone's life, if done with sincerity and compassion.

The young people we assist are the men and women of tomorrow (and indeed, of today). They are our future leaders who deserve our best NOW.

My role is extremely important to me because it makes a positive impact on the lives of others. I always strive for excellence in my duties so that we can collectively continue to produce quality work on behalf of the children and youth we advocate for in this province. I am delighted to work for the OCYA - an organization that has the rights, interests, and viewpoints of children and youth at the top of its agenda.

ANNE HUNT

Advocate

It is a humbling, rewarding experience, and an honour to work with young people. Throughout my 14 years as an advocate, I have been fortunate to watch children grow up and become incredible young adults moving forward with their dreams and attaining their respective goals. My role ranges. At times it involves sitting in a meeting with young people who are taking control and expressing their rights, interests, and viewpoints (the factors that must be considered when decisions are being made with them). At other times, it involves honouring their voices, empowering children and youth, looking at the world through their lenses, and celebrating their successes.

Building and maintaining relationships with young people, engaging key stakeholders, and respecting one another's roles is essential in advocating for young people. Cultivating those relationships from the onset is a key factor in working through issues that are expressed and identified by young people. Young people have a voice, a collective voice, and it is my privilege to help them exercise their right to be heard.

ERIN JAMIESON

Engagement and Education Consultant

I count myself very fortunate for a number of reasons. I have worked at the OCYA for over 10 years. As an Engagement and Education Consultant, it is my privilege to go out and talk to children, youth, and adults about children's rights and why those rights are important.

Growing up in my family, what I had to say mattered and was important. From a young age, I was taught I could make good choices if I was given the freedom to do so. I never felt silenced. This was invaluable to me. I never questioned who I was and my value as a person. I also spoke up when I was being wronged and learned the consequences of making different choices. I want this for the young people we work for.

I feel our office is privileged to help young people have a voice and feel they matter in complex systems where it is easy to be silenced. As adults, we also have a responsibility to preserve childhood in government systems, where the natural tendency is to forget they are kids.

It is an honour to stand up on behalf of young people and help them have a voice. We have to get it right. I truly believe no matter how young or old a young person is, they have value and should have a voice in the decisions being made about them. It is their life.

Working at the OCYA we have to provide the highest quality of service at all times — there is no other option. The work we do matters because it impacts others people's lives. That impact may be in the moment, or may not be felt for years to come, but it all counts.

BARB PARK

Advocate

I have dedicated my life's work to supporting young people who, on a daily basis, try to navigate adults and systems that make decisions which affect their lives. Early on in my career, the prevailing culture was that adults imposed decisions on young people, believing they were the experts. At the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, we allow young people to be the experts in their lives, thus ensuring their rights, interests, and viewpoints are affirmed and acted upon.

As an Advocate, I hear from young people and through their stories, together we make meaning out of their life experiences. The quality of my work is important because I know that, by having shared their stories with me, young people have given me the privilege of being invited into their lives.

For some young people, these are stories of mistrusting adults. For others, they are stories of pain. Regardless of the story, each carries with it the responsibility to ensure that I leave them with a sense of belonging, the skills to continue to navigate their way, and the courage to use their voice and tell their truth.

If I offer a young person the opportunity to actively participate with the individuals making decisions about their lives, and they feel valued and heard, then perhaps they can walk away feeling fulfilled with a new story to tell.

"Every child has a story to tell if a trusted listener can be found." Brendtro, Larry, du Toit, Leslie (2005). Response Ability Pathways: Restoring Bonds of Respect. pg.72.

INVESTIGATIONS

The OCYA investigates circumstances where young people involved with certain government systems have died or been seriously injured.[10]

Key Activities in 2014-2015

Investigative Reviews

Under section 9(2)(d) of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, the Advocate has the authority to "investigate systemic issues arising from a serious injury to or the death of a child who was receiving a designated service at the time of the injury or death, if, in the opinion of the Advocate, the investigation is warranted or in the public interest." A "designated service" includes:

- services under the *Enhancement Act* (with the exception of adoptions);
- services under the *PSECA*; and
- services provided to young people through the youth justice system if the young person was in open or closed custody at the time of the serious injury or death.

On May 14, 2014, the OCYA's mandate was expanded to include a review of the circumstances of young people who had received Child Intervention Services (with the exception of adoptions) within two years of their death.

The OCYA fulfills this mandate through the use of Investigative Reviews. The Investigative Review process is extensive, consisting of three phases: the Examination phase; the Assessment phase; and the Investigative Review phase.

All serious injuries and deaths reported to the OCYA are reviewed through the Examination phase. An OCYA investigator reviews the report of serious injury or death, along with any electronic records. If a systemic issue(s) is not identified, the review process stops here, following contact with someone close to the young person. If a systemic issue(s) is identified, a further review will occur and the circumstances will be reviewed in the Assessment phase.

In the Assessment phase, the investigator reviews the information provided in the Examination phase, and looks at additional information, including information from existing records of public bodies. If a systemic issue(s) is not identified, the review process stops here, following contact with someone close to the young person. If a systemic issue(s) is identified and it is in the public interest to review the matter further, an Investigative Review will occur.

In the Investigative Review phase, further information is gathered by looking at additional information, interviewing individuals familiar with the young person, examining best practices, and consulting with the Child and Family Services Council for Quality Assurance and a panel of subject matter experts. Recommendations to improve services to children and families may be made. An Investigative Review report is completed and made public.

A copy of the Investigations Process for Serious Injury or Death: Child Intervention Services is available on our website at www.ocya.alberta.ca.

10 A serious injury is defined as a life threatening injury to the child or an injury that may cause significant impairment to the child's health.

Fundamentally, an Investigative Review is about learning lessons, not assigning blame. It is not about assigning legal responsibilities nor does it replace or prevent other processes that may occur around a young person's injury or death, such as a fatality inquiry or criminal investigation.

An Investigative Review makes findings about the services that were provided to the young person, and makes recommendations that may help prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. Through an Investigative Review, the OCYA advocates for system improvements that will help enhance the overall safety and well-being of children and youth who are receiving designated services.

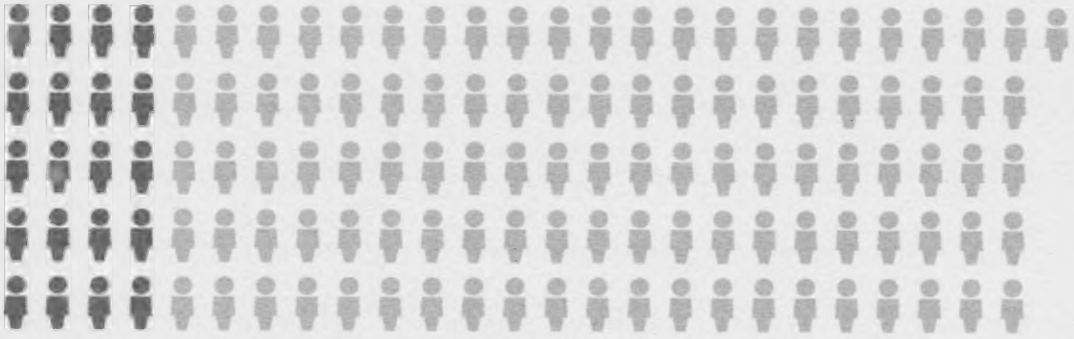
Strengthening Policies and Procedures in Investigative Reviews

In April 2014, the OCYA entered its third year with a mandate to investigate deaths and serious injuries of young people receiving designated services. With each new review, the OCYA has worked to continuously refine and improve its Investigative Review process. During 2014-2015, the OCYA finalized policy that clarifies these practices and procedures. Going forward, the policy will guide the OCYA's Investigative Review process, helping ensure that reviews are consistent and of high quality.

Responding to an Expanded Mandate

On May 14, 2014, the Advocate's investigative mandate was expanded by the Government of Alberta to include young people who died within two years of receiving Child Intervention Services. Consequently, there was a dramatic increase in the number of reports received by the Advocate concerning deaths of young people.

Reports Received by the Advocate: 2012-2015



2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
20	**35**	**71**
reports of serious injury or death	reports of serious injury or death	reports of serious injury or death

In response to this increase, the OCYA added three additional investigators in the summer 2014, doubling its investigative staff to six investigators. While this has helped enable the OCYA to work through the larger number of reports it now receives, further capacity building is required in order for the OCYA to effectively meet its investigative review mandate.

Encouraging Improvements in the Child Intervention System

Between April 1, 2014 and March 31, 2015, the OCYA released four Investigative Review reports.

Baby Annie — Annie was 14 days old when she died from undetermined causes. At the time of her passing, Annie was in her parent's care while her four older siblings were in foster care.

Baby Dawn — Dawn was six weeks old when she died from undetermined causes. At the time of her passing, Dawn was in foster care under a Temporary Guardianship Order.[11]

15-Year-Old Tony — Tony was 15 years old when he died by suicide. At the time he passed away, Tony was the subject of a Permanent Guardianship Order[12] and was living in a group home.

Baby Sadie: Serious Injury — Sadie was 10 months old when she was seriously injured while in her mother's care. At the time of her injury, Sadie's family was receiving Child Intervention Services.

In these four reports, the OCYA identified several systemic issues impacting children and youth and made numerous recommendations to the Government of Alberta to address these issues and improve the health and well-being of young people receiving designated services. Appendix A contains a summary of the systemic issues examined, and the recommendations made in the four reports. Copies of the full Investigative Review reports are available on the OCYA's website.

As noted earlier, not all matters reported to the Advocate will proceed to a full Investigative Review report. Many matters are closed after the Examination and Assessment phases of the OCYA's process. At the start of the 2014-2015 period, 18 reports were already in progress, carried over from the previous fiscal year. Of these, seven were closed after Assessment. During the 2014-2015 period, the Advocate received 71 new reports of serious injury or death of young people. Of these, 30 were closed after Examination, and four were closed after Assessment. Appendix B contains a summary of all 41 reports that were closed by the Advocate during 2014-2015.

As of March 31, 2015, 48 reports were in progress, at various phases of the OCYA's Investigative Review process. Of these, 19 were proceeding to a full Investigative Review report.

11 An order where the court awards custody and guardianship of the child to the Director for a specified period of time.

12 An order where the court awards guardianship of the child to the Director on a permanent basis. The child is in the care of the Director and remains in an approved placement. The guardianship of any former guardian is terminated and the Director is the sole legal guardian of the child.

The OCYA's Response to Reports of Serious Injury or Death Received in 2014-2015

Reports of serious injury or death carried forward (as of April 1, 2014):	**18**
Closed in 2014-2015 at Assessment	7
Proceeded to full Investigative Review in 2014-2015	11
Reports of serious injury or death received during 2014-2015 reporting period:	**71**
Serious injuries	8
Deaths - occurred while young person receiving designated services*	30
Deaths - occurred while young person involved with youth justice system**	1
Deaths - within two years of young person receiving child intervention services***	30
Deaths - not receiving designated services****	2
OCYA activities in response to reports received during 2014-2015 period (as of March 31, 2015):	**71**
Examination Phase	21
Closed after Examination	30
Assessment Phase	8
Closed after Assessment	4
Proceeded to full Investigative Review report	8
Total reports addressed during 2014-2015:	**89**
Closed during the period	41
Remaining in progress as of March 31, 2015	48

* *Reports received from the Ministry.*

** *This report was regarding a young person who was receiving services from both the youth justice system and the child intervention system. He was in a youth justice custody placement when he passed away. Report received from both Alberta Human Services and Alberta Justice and Solicitor General.*

*** *Reports received from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.*

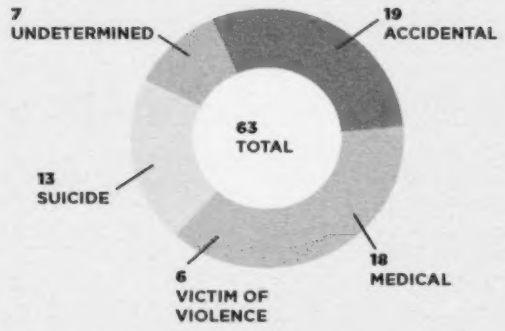
**** *The young person did not have legal status under the Enhancement Act at the time of the incident and was not receiving designated services. Their death was reported to the Advocate because the young person was from another province and Alberta was providing services (or had provided services within two years) through a Courtesy Supervision Agreement.*

The OCYA appreciates...

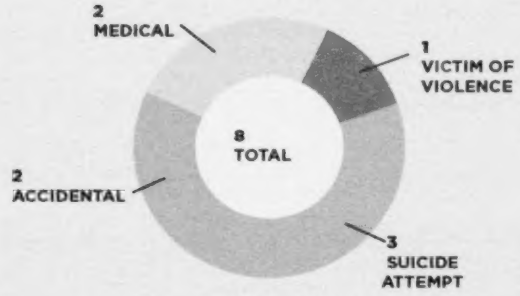
...the **Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary (BGCC)** for developing their new housing program in response to LGBTQ2S youth who are over-represented in the homeless population. Aura Host Homes is leading the way in supporting youth in housing where their sexual orientation and gender identity is respected and celebrated and natural supports are honoured. Great work BGCC for assisting our young people to transition to adulthood in a safe and supportive environment!

Breakdown of 71 Reports of Serious Injuries and Deaths Reported to the OCYA

TYPE OF INCIDENT: DEATH



TYPE OF INCIDENT: SERIOUS INJURY



Accidental – refers to serious injury or death related to motor vehicle accidents, accidental overdoses, household accidents, house fires, etc.

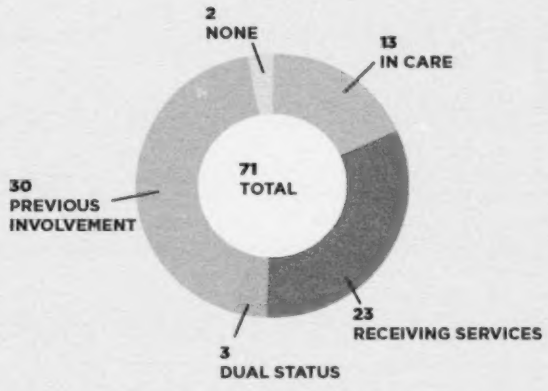
Medical – refers to serious injury or death related to chronic or acute illness.

Victim of Violence – refers to serious injury or death where the young person has been injured by another person. This includes stabbing, blunt force trauma, strangulation, fire, etc.

Undetermined – refers to deaths that the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner have identified as undetermined or that the manner or cause of death is still under review. Also includes deaths previously categorized as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Serious Injury – refers to injuries that were considered life-threatening or may have caused significant impairment to the child's health.

STATUS OF INVOLVEMENT WITH DESIGNATED SERVICE



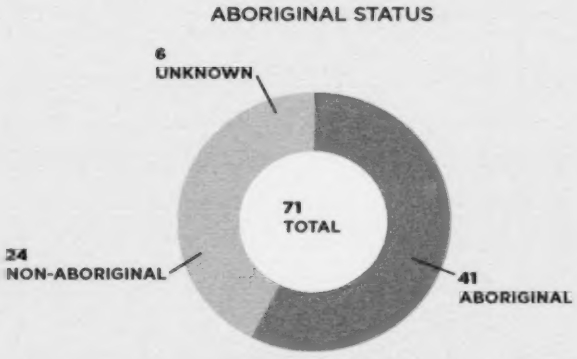
In care – the young person was in the care of Child Intervention Services.

Receiving Services – the young person was receiving services under the Enhancement Act or PSECA but not in care.

Dual Status – the young person was involved with more than one designated service at the time of the incident (e.g., Enhancement Act and youth justice services or Enhancement Act and PSECA).

Previous Involvement – the young person had involvement with Child Intervention Services within two years of their death.

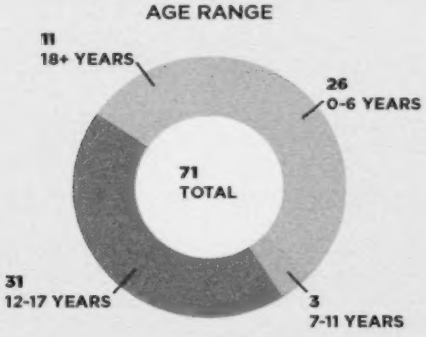
None – the young person did not have legal status under the Enhancement Act at the time of the incident and was not receiving designated services. Their death was reported to the Advocate because the young person was from another province and Alberta was providing services (or had provided services within two years) through a Courtesy Supervision Agreement.



Aboriginal – refers to young people who identify as First Nations, Inuit, Métis, "Non-Status," "potential to be registered," and "unknown Aboriginal group."

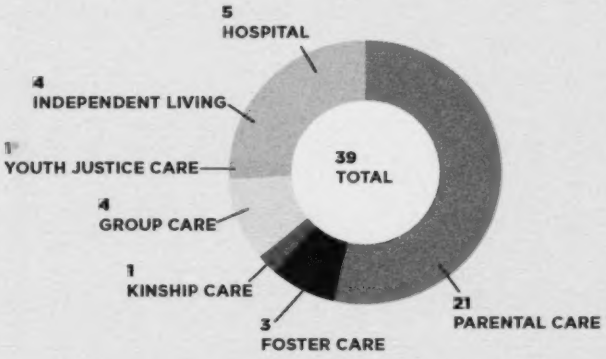
Non-Aboriginal – refers to young people who are identified as other than Aboriginal.

Unknown – refers to young people whose ethnic or cultural background is unknown.



Placements for Young People

Of the 71 reports of serious injuries and deaths reported to the OCYA: 39 young people were receiving Child Intervention Services when they were seriously injured or died; 30 young people had received services within two years of their death; and two young people were not receiving services (i.e., Courtesy Supervision Agreement). The following is a summary of the 39 placements at the time of the incident:



* *The young person had dual status with Child Intervention Services and was placed in an open custody group home through the youth justice system.*

Kinship Care – refers to a family home that is approved to care for a child in need because of a family connection or significant relationship to the child (e.g., grandparent, aunt, close family friend).

Independent Living – refers to those living situations where the young person has formal supports (Supported Independent Living) or those situations where they are living on their own and may be receiving some financial supports.

Looking Ahead

With its expanded mandate, the OCYA is receiving more reports of serious injuries and death than ever before. The OCYA is working towards providing a more timely and effective response to reports of serious injuries or deaths; committed to completing Assessments within four months of receiving a report of serious injury or death of a young person; and completing Investigative Review reports within one year of the matter being approved for a full review.

Performance Measure	Last Actual 2013-2014	Target 2014-2015	Actual 2014-2015
All serious injuries to or deaths of children or youth receiving designated services are reviewed within four months of being reported to the Child and Youth Advocate to determine if an investigation is required.	under development	85%	51%*
Investigations into serious injuries or deaths will be completed within twelve months of determination that an investigation is required.	under development	85%	80%*

** Result of delays in the Investigative Review process with the OCYA and the Ministry. A plan is in place to address this issue.*

Since assuming its investigative review mandate, the OCYA has received a steadily increasing number of reports of serious injury or death of young people. A significant reason for this is related to legislative amendments made to the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* in 2013 and 2014.

Over the next fiscal year (2015-2016), the OCYA expects to complete at least 13 full Investigative Reviews. Of these reviews, eight involve Aboriginal young people attempting suicide or dying by suicide. This is cause for serious concern. Accordingly, the OCYA will be convening a committee of experts to examine the circumstances of these Aboriginal young people, identify systemic issues that contributed to such tragic circumstances, and make meaningful recommendations that can bring about change.

The OCYA will also work to support consistent, high-quality investigations and reviews by:

- building on its finalized investigations policy and developing a procedures manual. This will provide further guidance to investigators as they respond to reports of serious injury and death of young people; and
- developing an information system for Investigative Reviews. All data accumulated and work performed since April 1, 2012 will be populated into the system, and all new reports received as of April 1, 2015 will be entered into the system as they are received.

The OCYA will also work with the Ministry to ensure that file information is received in a timely manner. There continues to be some issues in this regard; however, the Ministry has indicated it is committed to resolving these issues.

LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Established in 2006, the OCYA's Legal Representation for Children and Youth (LRCY) program provides independent legal representation for young people, under the age of 18, for child intervention matters.

On a rotating basis, legal appointments are made to private practice lawyers who maintain good standing on the LRCY's roster. As of March 2015, there were 74 lawyers on the LRCY roster throughout Alberta.

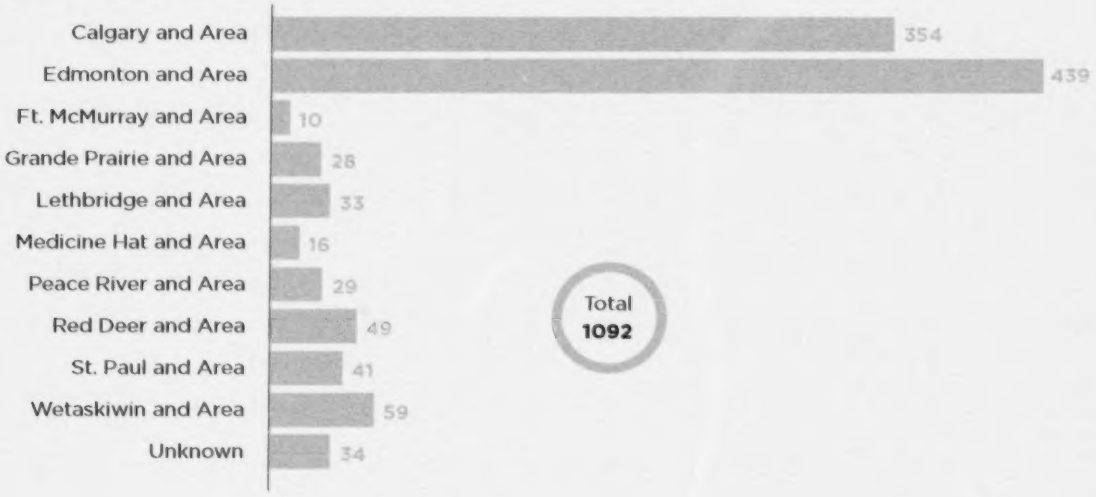
Key Activities in 2014-2015

Responding to the Legal Needs of Young People

During 2014-2015, a total of 1,092 appointments[13] were made to LRCY lawyers. This was a decrease of 85 appointments (seven per cent) from the previous fiscal year.

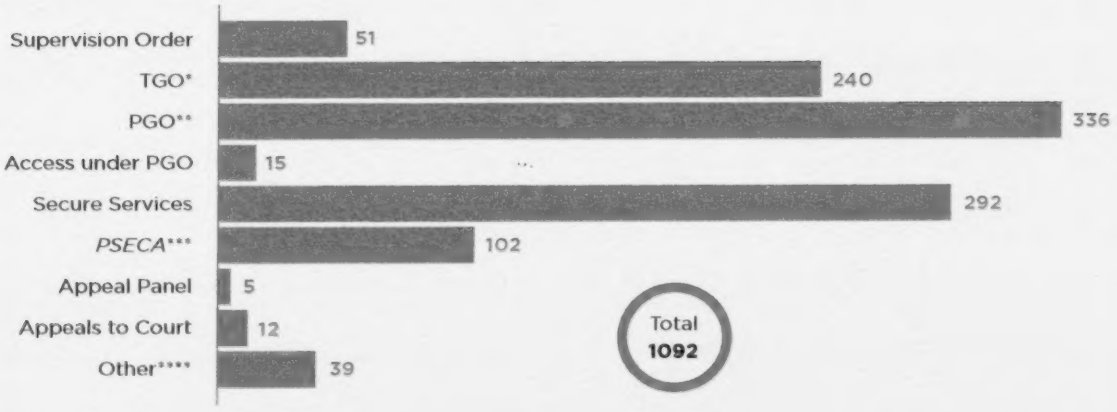
A total of 1,641 children were appointed legal counsel, which was a decrease of 224 children (12 per cent) from the previous fiscal year.

LRCY Court Location Region



13 The total number of appointments does not reflect the total number of children served, as at times, an appointment will cover a sibling group.

Appointments by Court Matter



* *TGO refers to Temporary Guardianship Order*

** *PGO refers to Permanent Guardianship Order*

*** *PSECA refers to confinement orders under the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act*

**** *"Other" includes: 1) guardianship applications under the Family Law Act for children with permanent guardianship status, and 2) applications regarding a youth's child (when the youth has Enhancement Act status)*

Supporting Continuous Learning

It is important that young people represented by LRCY roster lawyers benefit from high quality legal services. To that end, LRCY strives for continuous learning and sets expectations for lawyers on the LRCY roster. For lawyers to maintain their membership on the roster, they must complete at least three hours of related, approved training per calendar year. Each year, LRCY offers professional development and training sessions for roster lawyers. During 2014-2015, the following sessions were offered.

- Emerging Practices & Initiatives in Child Intervention
- Compassion Fatigue
- Applying the Neurosequential Model to Children Exposed to Domestic Violence
- Domestic Violence among Immigrant Women
- OCYA's Legal Appointment and Payment System
- Presenting the Child's View in Court
- Very Important Paws – Zebra Centre

Lunch-and-learn sessions were offered in Calgary and Edmonton. These sessions were facilitated by roster lawyers Cheryl Arcand-Kootenay in Edmonton, and Terri Mair and Jim Robertson in Calgary. The sessions provided opportunities for roster lawyers to discuss current relevant case law and networking.

Enhancing the Quality of LRCY Legal Services

In 2013, the OCYA completed a review of the LRCY roster, examining roster qualifications, training, and quality assurance. As a result of this review, LRCY policies and practice guidelines were revised during the past year. The revisions will help ensure that young people assisted by LRCY will benefit from high quality legal services. Major revisions include:

- increased contact with young people;
- monitoring compliance to LRCY Role of Counsel Guidelines;
- increased rigor in consideration of new roster applicants;
- increased training requirements; and
- additional conditions for remaining on the LRCY roster.

Looking Ahead

In the upcoming year, LRCY will be undertaking several activities as part of an ongoing effort to enhance the quality of legal representation for young people.

As a result of the roster review, all LRCY roster lawyers wishing to remain on the roster will complete an interview with a panel consisting of the LRCY manager, a LRCY mentor roster lawyer, and a youth representative. Interviews with all LRCY roster lawyers will be completed by December 31, 2015. Once interviews are completed, successful roster lawyers will be asked to sign new roster agreements.

In May 2015, the OCYA will host its third Biennial "Best Practices in Child Legal Representation" Conference in Calgary, Alberta. The goal of the conference is to further develop and improve child legal representation practices by:

- providing a forum to learn about new areas of practice and to share practice experience;
- showcasing best practice in child legal representation; and
- examining child intervention practices and child development.

The OCYA will increase its efforts to contact youth clients and ask for their feedback about legal services they have received through their LRCY roster lawyer. In addition, the OCYA will explore ways of obtaining feedback from other stakeholders about the legal services provided through LRCY roster lawyers. Feedback gathered through these efforts will help LRCY ensure that legal services remain relevant and effective, and are satisfactory to youth clients.

The OCYA appreciates...

...the **John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights** for their tireless efforts in promoting human rights across Alberta, particularly their work with and on behalf of the marginalized and vulnerable young people of our province.

DID YOU KNOW...

41%

Over the last year, the number of young people with Support and Financial Assistance Agreements has increased by 41%.

66

In March 2015, 66 young people who were 22 and 23 years old had Support and Financial Assistance Agreements, thanks to changes to the CYFEA Regulations that were made in July 2014.

69%

In March 2015, 69% of children in care were Aboriginal. (proportion is consistent with last year)

AGE

29% of children in care are 5 years old or younger, 32% are between 6-11 years, and 38% are between 12-17 years. (note – changes in proportions since last year were very small)

3+ TIMES

26% of Aboriginal young people in care and 15% of non-Aboriginal young people in care move placements three or more times during their in care involvement.

6,987

In March 2015, there were 6,987 children in care. This is a decrease of 6% from the previous year.

39%

39% of Aboriginal young people placed in foster or kinship care live with Aboriginal caregivers.

ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

The Engagement and Education division is responsible for:

- public education;
- Aboriginal engagement;
- community and youth engagement; and
- communications.

The division promotes the rights, interests, and well-being of children through public education. A key focus of this work is engaging with young people to educate them about their rights, the importance of those rights, how to exercise those rights, and how the OCYA can assist them.

Activities are also undertaken to engage stakeholders. This engagement focuses on raising awareness of the rights of young people and how to help young people realize their rights. This also strengthens our presence in the community, creates a strong network for us to reach out into the community, and raises awareness of our office.

Education efforts also help build awareness about the OCYA, its mandate, and its work. This enables a greater number of young people to be aware of the OCYA and how to access its services.

Key Activities in 2014-2015

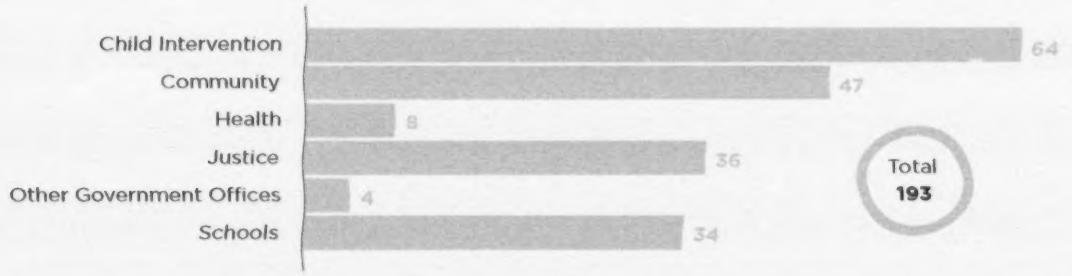
Strengthening Engagement and Education

During 2014-2015, a strong focus was improving the quality of engagement and education undertaken by the division. Notably, the division undertook a review and revision of presentations that it frequently delivers during engagement activities, and commenced a process of continually updating all training materials. Work also began on policy development for the division that will further refine its work and improve the efficiency of the programs and services it delivers.

Expanding the OCYA's Reach

During the 2014-2015 reporting period, the OCYA reached out to numerous stakeholders across Alberta. The organization was involved in 193 separate engagement and education activities with a total attendance of over 8,500 individuals. These activities ranged from hosting booths to generate awareness, to holding specific workshops on advocacy skills.

Number of Engagement and Education Activities by Audience Group (Provincial)*



*Approximately one-third of Engagement and Educations activities were for youth audiences.

The division's community engagement and public education activities included presenting to, providing training to, or hosting information booths at the following:

- Alberta FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) Conference
- Alberta Foster Parent Association Conference
- Alberta Association for Services to Children and Families Conference
- Alberta Works Aboriginal Partnership staff training
- Family and Community Support Services Conference
- Alberta College of Social Workers Annual Conference
- Delegated First Nation Agency staff and Child and Family Services staff at delegation training sessions across the province
- Canadian Foster Parent Conference
- Treaty 6 & 8 Educational Conferences
- Guidance Counselors of Alberta Conference
- Piikani Youth Forum
- High Risk Youth Conference
- New Youth Justice Staff training
- Educational Assistant Conference
- Camp fYrefly
- Gay-Straight Alliance Provincial Conference
- Office of the Public Guardian staff training
- School at the Legislature
- Youth Justice Committee Conference
- Advocacy 101 Training to Alberta Human Services and agency staff in Fort McMurray
- Mental Health Symposium

Enhancing the OCYA's Online Presence

In November 2014, the OCYA launched its new, child- and youth-friendly website, which can be visited at www.ocya.alberta.ca. Consistent with the OCYA's focus on serving young people, the home page of the website features two distinct entry portals: the first is for "Children & Youth" while the other is "For Everyone Else." This reflects the OCYA's culture of directly engaging young people, and making them feel welcome and respected. The new website is easier to navigate, contains a wealth of information about the OCYA's services, and incorporates a live Twitter feed. The new website is also scalable and can be viewed on mobile devices.

Considerable progress was also made in strengthening the OCYA's social media presence. In 2014-2015, the OCYA's number of followers on Twitter increased by almost 50 per cent compared to the previous year, while the OCYA's number of Facebook followers have also increased. By using social media in complementary fashion with traditional media efforts, the OCYA has extended its reach to stakeholders and, most importantly, to the children and youth it serves.

Celebrating National Child Day

Each year on November 20, Canada and many other countries around the world celebrate National Child Day. This day serves as a reminder of those countries' shared commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the "CRC").[14]

Once again, the OCYA was involved in supporting and promoting National Child Day in Alberta. We have a provincial partnership that includes The United Way (Edmonton and Calgary), The City of Edmonton, The City of Calgary, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, school boards, and the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research. On November 20, 2014, National Child Day celebrations focused on Article 31 of the CRC: a young person's right to play. The OCYA supported and participated in provincial and local National Child Day committees, activities, and events.

Raising Awareness About Child and Youth Mental Health

On October 29, 2014, the OCYA and the Alberta Mental Health Patient Advocate, in partnership with the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research, hosted "Taking the Next Steps Together: Youth Mental Health Conference" in Edmonton. The conference was attended by more than 100 leading Albertans who have knowledge, experience, and skills in working with children and youth with complex needs. Participants focused on the progress achieved to date in moving toward the preferred future state of mental health services for children and youth with complex needs.[15]

This event built on the work of an initial symposium held on February 19, 2014,[16] which produced a set of recommended actions for improving navigation of and access to quality mental health services for children and youth with complex needs.

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14 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international treaty developed in 1989 that recognizes the rights of children.

15 A copy of the report related to the symposium can be accessed at: http://www.ocya.alberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/OCYARpt_2015_Taking-the-Next-Steps-Together-MHS-2.pdf

16 The initial symposium was entitled "A Policy-Practice Conversation Focusing on Children and Youth with Complex Needs and Access to the Mental Health System."

Engaging the Advice of Youth

The OCYA's Youth Advisory Panel continues to be an active and energetic forum. Consisting of nine young people from across the province, the Youth Advisory Panel meets quarterly to provide input, advice, and feedback to the OCYA. The panel has engaged in several activities throughout the year such as:

- contributing to the development of *OCYA News*;
- participating in a focus group for the OCYA Special Report;
- participating in the celebration of the OCYA 25th Anniversary;
- exploring the 'right to play' theme for National Child Day 2014; and
- exploring the concept of advocacy through expressive art.

The views and perspectives gathered from the panel members have been both illuminating and informative in helping the OCYA continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of its work and initiatives.

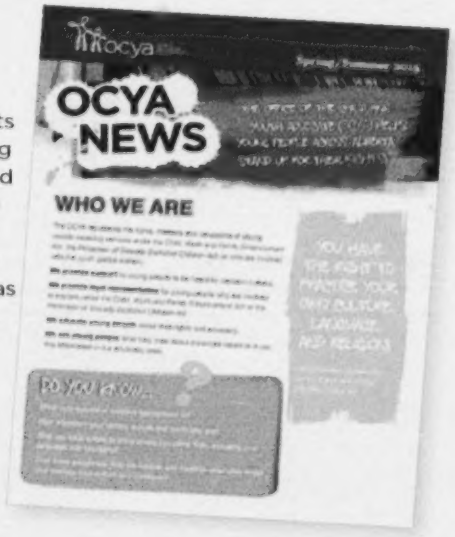
An additional initiative which commenced during 2014-2015 is the creation of "Friends of the Advocate," which is designed to support young people who are interested in being involved with the work of the OCYA.

Increasing Young People's Input

The OCYA continues to explore ways of hearing from young people and involving young people in its work. During the past year, for example, youth representatives participated on advocate hiring panels that were held in Edmonton and Calgary. The youth representation provided valuable context and offered unique perspectives during the recruitment process. Advocacy Services also facilitated focus groups with young people to gather input about advocacy services, and to hear about barriers faced by youth in the justice system.

Informing Youth About the OCYA

In December 2014, the OCYA produced the fall/winter edition of its youth newsletter *OCYA News*. The newsletter is aimed at informing young people about their rights, the OCYA's role and mandate, and what they should expect from the government systems that serve them. Consistent with the theme of National Child Day 2014, the theme of the December newsletter was 'a young person's right to play.' Through mail, email, and personal delivery, the newsletter was sent to approximately 4,000 young people and the adults who have supportive roles in their lives.



Supporting the Advocate's Special Report

Since mid-2014, the Advocate has been developing a Special Report on the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care. The purpose of the Special Report is to develop findings and make recommendations to the Government of Alberta that will:

- improve Aboriginal children's and families' experiences and outcomes with Child Intervention;
- push Aboriginal Child Intervention to a greater level of practice excellence; and
- collectively influence the various levels of government and others to change their relationships with First Nations and Métis peoples regarding Child Intervention.

The OCYA is actively engaging many people to help inform the Special Report. Some of the earliest engagement sessions held in 2014-2015 were meetings with Elders in different parts of Alberta; the Grand Chiefs from Treaty 6, 7, and 8; and the President of the Métis Nation of Alberta, to hear their perspectives and receive their guidance. Elder's Guidance Meetings were held in the south, central, and northwest areas of the province. Further Elder's Guidance Meetings will be held in the north and northeast regions of Alberta.

The engagement process will also involve discussions with Aboriginal young people who are receiving intervention services under the *Enhancement Act*, their families, and community service providers and stakeholders. The OCYA hopes to hear from these individuals about what they find important and what would be helpful to them.

Internal Engagement

We also provided training and engagement for our staff's ongoing learning. Presentations occurred in regular lunch-and-learn formats. Six sessions concerned the topic of the over-representation of Aboriginal children and youth in care. We invited various presenters to further inform us about this topic and had a group of Aboriginal youth who presented on the Circle of Courage program.

The OCYA appreciates...

...the **Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre** for their leadership in helping young people and their families heal from abuse. The level of innovation, compassion, and collaboration happening within the Centre is inspiring. We commend their staff for their efforts at keeping young people safe and engaging the community to inspire hope for change.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year the Engagement and Education Division has a number of goals. We will continue to raise awareness of the OCYA; engage the public and stakeholders in understanding advocacy and the importance of respecting a young person's rights, interests, and viewpoints; continue educating Alberta's vulnerable children and youth about their rights; improve our evaluation of education sessions; and continue developing positive relationships with young people, organizations, and communities. Additionally, we will promote and encourage the development of natural advocates and community advocacy organizations through outreach, information, education, and support.

Some future key activities include recruiting new members for the OCYA's Youth Advisory Panel, with a focus on increased rural representation. We will continue to help plan and support National Aboriginal Day events and National Child Day activities; complete a brochure for youth in the justice system to inform them of their rights; continue working to revise the OCYA's rights booklets for young people; and reach out in strategic ways to engage group homes and other placements. We will also be expanding our educational materials for use with Aboriginal youth audiences.

Stakeholder engagement is an important component of the work we do and encompasses a range of activities aimed at initiating and sustaining constructive and collaborative relationships. Given this priority, in the coming year the OCYA is expanding "Friends of the Advocate" to include adult stakeholders who are interested in the work of our office and to provide opportunities for them to become involved.

Young people involved with the "Friends of the Advocate" will receive monthly messages from the OCYA about upcoming events, and about opportunities to share their voices on issues affecting them. Opportunities include:

- completing surveys;
- participating in focus groups;
- entering contests;
- speaking at or attending events;
- contributing content for our youth in care newsletter *OCYA News*; and
- providing feedback on what matters to young people who are receiving our services.

The OCYA appreciates...

...the **Bearspaw Legal Education and Resource Centre** for their innovative, creative, and thought-provoking resources that are raising community awareness on rights and social/justice issues.

STRATEGIC SUPPORT

Strategic Support provides strategic advice and business services to the OCYA in the areas of finance, budget and business planning, human resources, information management and technology, accommodations, and administrative services.

Key Activities in 2014-2015

Building Capacity to Assist Young People

In July 2014, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices approved supplementary funding to support the OCYA in fulfilling its expanded mandate to investigate the deaths of children and youth who received Child Intervention Services within two years of their death. This supplementary funding was used to enhance the OCYA's investigative capacity from three investigators to six. In 2014-2015, the OCYA also enhanced its outreach capacity with the addition of a Public Education consultant.

During the past year a number of strategies were also implemented to support the OCYA's Strategic Health and Wellness Plan. These included enhancing the OCYA's Occupational Health and Safety Program, implementing a monthly Healthy Lifestyles Newsletter for staff, and providing sessions to all staff on the Code of Conduct and Ethics.

Enhancing Edmonton Operations

On August 31, 2014, the OCYA consolidated its two Edmonton locations into a new, single office. The accommodations team worked extensively with Alberta Infrastructure and a number of contractors on the design, build, and move.

The relocation has strengthened collaboration across the OCYA's divisions and helped to build stronger working relationships throughout the organization. The new office also offers a physical environment that is inviting for young people. The OCYA is very proud of its new office and has received many positive reviews from visitors. On September 25, 2014, the OCYA hosted an Open House for stakeholders to tour the new office.

Addressing Information Technology Needs

As part of the OCYA's relocation to a new office, significant work was undertaken to build a new data centre, and to migrate partnering Legislative Offices (the Ombudsman, Public Interest Commissioner, and Ethics Commissioner) to the new environment.

Coinciding with its move to a new office, the OCYA migrated its network, electronic files, email, and print services to the new shared Legislative Offices environment. While the migration was successful, the OCYA has experienced some technical issues in accessing its program applications in the Human Services environment and the Government of Alberta environment. Work will continue on resolving these issues as the next phase of IT migration is planned.

Strategic Support also undertook a project during 2014-2015 to define user requirements as part of developing an investigation system and a tracking system for systemic issues, recommendations, and public education sessions. An in-house application was built to track reports of serious injuries and deaths, and to manage these files through the process of examination, assessment, and investigation. The in-house application was rolled out at the end of the fiscal year for testing by the investigators. Going forward, the application will be populated with information received by the OCYA since April 1, 2012.

Looking Ahead

In the upcoming year, Strategic Support will continue to work toward improving supports for OCYA staff. Initiatives planned in the coming year include:

- facilitating an agreement for Alberta Education to deliver human resource support to the OCYA for the 2015-2016 fiscal year;
- implementing a Human Resources' Strategic Plan that addresses strategies for capacity building, provides recruitment and succession management, supports leadership development, optimizes employee performance, and promotes workplace health and safety;
- leading the setup of information technology infrastructure to support OCYA program applications and to migrate these applications into the Legislative Offices' shared environment;
- continuing the implementation of the new investigations system;
- enhancing program applications to support quality assurance reviews;
- launching a SharePoint application to support internal communications and access to internal information throughout the OCYA;
- guiding the continued implementation of strategies and initiatives supporting the OCYA's Health and Wellness Strategic Plan;
- continuing to enhance the Occupational Health and Safety program, through implementation of hazard assessment tools and staff training; and
- finalizing the redevelopment of the Administrative, Financial, and Information Management and Technology policies and procedures.

IN CLOSING

As the OCYA closes the books on its third year as an independent office of the Alberta Legislature, the importance of its role and work is ever more clear.

Alberta's children and youth are its future. They are our future thinkers, builders, and leaders. Regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds or their family circumstances, they all deserve the opportunity to fulfill their hopes and dreams. They all have a right to be heard and to have their views considered.

For too many children and youth, hopes and dreams can often seem far away, and the concept of having one's views considered is foreign. It is for these young people that the OCYA exists and why all of us at the OCYA are passionate about what we do.

I wish to thank the many young people who have given us the privilege to work with them and to be a part of their lives. Though our formal relationship may have ended, please know that we carry your stories, your courage, and your perspectives with us each day. Your insights and experiences inform our day-to-day work and help us improve the way we work so that we can be of even better service to other young people in the future.

I also want to thank the staff of the OCYA who have worked tirelessly during a time of heavy workloads and limited resources. Your tremendous efforts are recognized and appreciated. Despite the challenges this work can bring, your limitless passion and compassion continue to shine through in your work. This makes a world of difference to the young people we serve.

To the OCYA's friends, partners, and stakeholders, I also offer profound gratitude. A huge amount of our work is rooted in relationships, so we understand the importance of working in a spirit of openness, frankness, and professionalism. We look forward to further developing our relationships with you and we continue to value your advice and counsel as we continue to learn and seek to improve.

This year, quality became a central focus of the OCYA. As highlighted in this annual report, every division participated in the process of examining what we do well, and determining what we can do better. That was just the beginning. In the years to come, we will build on our reputation as a reliable leader in child advocacy by continually improving quality, examining our practice, leading innovation, and enhancing services.

An important part of reaching this goal will be a commitment to exploring new and better ways of delivering our services and fulfilling our mandate, and an ongoing openness to new and innovative ideas. Our clients, friends, and stakeholders — and importantly, Alberta's young people — are vital partners in helping us do this. We welcome your thoughts and perspectives as we seek to provide the very best services we can to children and youth.

[Original signed by Del Graff]

Del Graff
Child and Youth Advocate

APPENDIX A

2014-2015 Recommendations made in Investigative Review Reports

Between April 1, 2014 and March 31, 2015, the OCYA released four Investigative Review reports. These reports are available through the OCYA's website.[17]

Baby Annie

Annie was 14 days old when she died from undetermined causes. At the time of her passing, Annie was in her parent's care while her four older siblings were in foster care.

The Investigative Review examined five systemic issues:

1. Risk assessment of newborns in a family with active Child Intervention Services involvement;
2. Ensuring balance in delivering Child Intervention Services;
3. Service coordination and information sharing in the assessment of complex families;
4. Meeting the needs of infants exposed to drugs *in utero*; and
5. Enhancing parenting assessments used in child intervention decision-making.

A review of these systemic issues resulted in five recommendations:[18]

1. Child Intervention Services should institute policy that is proactive in planning for children and families when a newborn child is expected into a family that is receiving intervention services.
2. The Ministry of Human Services should work with Alberta Health Services to implement a provincial, multi-service response model that enables collaborative and joint response to families with at-risk children who are involved with Human Services and Alberta Health Services.
3. The Ministry of Human Services and Alberta Health Services should establish policy and protocols to ensure sufficient information sharing and a collaborative, timely (prior to discharge) response for infants at risk from Neo-Natal Abstinence Syndrome.
4. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta and the Alberta College of Pharmacists should review the effectiveness of the Pharmaceutical Information Network to detect and flag multi-doctoring and potential safety concerns related to codeine and benzodiazepine prescriptions, with a view to preventing fetal exposure to these medications.
5. (a) Child Intervention Services should review how parenting capacity assessments are conducted across the province and implement policy that ensures parenting assessments are done in a consistent manner and are comprehensive in nature.
   (b) Child Intervention Services should ensure that parenting norms unique to First Nations and other cultural groups are incorporated into parenting capacity assessments.

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17 http://www.ocya.alberta.ca

18 The Advocate regularly reports on the progress of recommendations at: www.ocya.alberta.ca/adult/publications/recommendations/. The Ministry of Human Services also publicly responds to recommendations at: www.humanservices.alberta.ca/publications/15896.html.

Baby Dawn

Dawn was six weeks old when she died from undetermined causes. At the time of her passing, Dawn was in foster care under a Temporary Guardianship Order.

The Investigative Review looked at three systemic issues:

1. The total number of children in the care of a foster parent;
2. Placing a child in a home with a prospective kinship care provider;[19] and
3. Safe sleep practices with infants.

A review of these systemic issues resulted in one recommendation:

1. The Ministry of Human Services should implement clear policy for foster parents providing direction not to bed-share with infants placed in their care.

15-Year-Old Tony

Tony was a 15-year-old youth who died by suicide. At the time he passed away, Tony was the subject of a Permanent Guardianship Order and was living in a group home.

The Investigative Review looked at three systemic issues:

1. Ensuring relationships for Aboriginal children;
2. Assessing risk of suicide; and
3. Sharing information between caregivers.

A review of these systemic issues resulted in three recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Human Services, with its service delivery partners, should strengthen processes related to:
   - The search for meaningful relationships in an Aboriginal child's life and ensure that the extended family of both parents is explored.
   - The ability of placement facilities to provide Aboriginal children in care continuous and ongoing access to traditional knowledge and activities.

   These processes should be documented and audited for compliance to ensure that Aboriginal children remain connected to their family, community and culture.
2. The Ministry of Human Services, with its service delivery partners, should require a suicide risk inventory be completed for all young people, who have been identified as at risk of suicide, on a regular and ongoing basis – not just at the time of crisis.
3. The Ministry of Human Services, with its service delivery partners, should review policy and practice in information sharing when a child transitions to a new placement. Emphasis must be placed on direct communication between day-to-day caregivers to support the continuity of successful treatment approaches. This means those caregivers who work directly with young people in their placements.

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19 Refers to a home that is approved to care for a child in need because of a family connection or significant relationship to the child (e.g., grandparent, aunt, close family friend).

Baby Sadie: Serious Injury

Sadie was 10 months old when she was seriously injured while in her mother's care. At the time of her injury, Sadie's family was receiving Child Intervention Services.

The Investigative Review looked at three systemic issues:

1. Improving accessibility of electronic health information;
2. Determining risk and protective factors through case analysis; and
3. Collaborative strategies.

The review of these systemic issues resulted in three recommendations:

1. Alberta Health should build on past and current efforts to implement the consistent use of electronic records for children across Alberta to facilitate adequate information sharing among medical professionals. This would allow indicators of child abuse to be easily accessed (flagged) and used to identify possible patterns.
2. Alberta Human Services should review their training for frontline staff specifically related to critical thinking, risk assessment and case analysis. Training should be strengthened and tailored for assessors and supervisors to ensure well-informed case analysis and case-planning for young people and their families.
3. Alberta Human Services should:
    - Ensure collaborative strategies are in place for every young person receiving intervention services; and,
    - Include regular case conferences in the child intervention standards and monitor for compliance.

APPENDIX B

2014-2015 Summary of Concluded Reports of Serious Injury or Death of Young People

During 2014-2015, the OCYA received the following reports concerning the serious injury to or death of young people receiving intervention services. Consistent with its mandate, the OCYA addressed these reports under its investigative review process. This is a summary of reports that were concluded by the OCYA.

Closed After Examination

All reports of serious injuries and deaths are reviewed through the Examination Phase. This phase involves a review of the Report of Serious Injury or Death and a review of Child Intervention Services' electronic file information regarding the young person. During this reporting period, the process was expanded to include contact with someone close to the young person (whenever possible, a family member) before closing the file at Examination. The following reports were closed after the Examination phase, as it was determined from the information gathered that there was limited potential for further learning and systemic issues had not been identified.

1. A 16-month-old infant suffered a cardiac arrest[20] while in the hospital. His kinship care provider had taken him to hospital after he became ill with a fever. Through the course of the Advocate's examination, it was determined that the infant's condition was the result of an illness and not an injury. The infant's condition was due to hypoglycemia[21] and hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy.[22] He will require extensive medical treatment and physical therapy for the rest of his life.
2. A 15-year-old youth was struck by a vehicle while crossing the street. She suffered a dislocated knee and a fractured leg. She underwent surgery and was in hospital for several days. At the time of her injury she was the subject of a Permanent Guardianship Order[23] and placed in a group home. Child Intervention Services were following up on meeting her needs. She is expected to make a full recovery.
3. A 14-year-old youth with significant medical needs passed away due to complications related to Spastic Quadriplegia Cerebral Palsy.[24] He was nonverbal, confined to a wheelchair, and required a feeding tube. He was medically fragile, prone to respiratory infections, and was fully dependent for all of his care needs. At the time of his passing, he was the subject of a Permanent Guardianship Order and placed with his grandmother.

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20 Sudden cardiac arrest is the sudden, unexpected loss of heart function, breathing and consciousness. Sudden cardiac arrest is different from a heart attack.

21 Low blood sugar.

22 Hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy (HIE) is a condition in which the brain does not receive enough oxygen.

23 An order where the court awards guardianship of the child to the Director on a permanent basis. The child is in the care of the Director and remains in an approved placement. The guardianship of any former guardian is terminated and the Director is the sole legal guardian of the child.

24 Spastic Quadriplegia/Quadriparesis is the most severe form of Cerebral Palsy and is often associated with moderate-to-severe intellectual disability. Speaking and being understood are difficult. Seizures can be frequent and hard to control.

4. A 14-month-old infant passed away due to natural causes. At the time of her passing, she was in the care of her grandmother and there was an open Family Enhancement Agreement.[25] She was born almost three months premature, resulting in significant medical needs. She spent most of her life in hospital and Child Intervention Services provided supports to her family.
5. A three-month-old infant passed away due to accidental asphyxiation. At the time of her passing, she was in her parents' care. The family had minimal involvement with Child Intervention Services; a Screening[26] was opened when the infant was transported to hospital due to this isolated incident.
6. A one-month-old infant passed away due to complications related to his premature birth. He remained in the neo-natal intensive care unit until his death. Child Intervention Services had an open Safety Assessment.[27]
7. A nine-month-old infant died from cancer. He had been brought to Alberta from another province for medical treatment. Due to religious beliefs, his parents did not consent to required treatment. Child Intervention Services in Alberta obtained a Medical Treatment Order.[28] Despite this, the medical intervention was not successful and the infant passed away.
8. An 18-year-old young man died as the result of suicide. Child Intervention Services was providing supports through a Courtesy Supervision Agreement[29] with another province. The advocacy office in the other province was notified of his death. The services provided in Alberta appeared to be appropriate.
9. A three-month-old infant was born premature and weighed less than three pounds at birth. He had multiple health concerns, including a number of chromosomal disorders, and was not expected to survive beyond birth. At the time of his passing, he was in his parents' care and Child Intervention Services had an open Screening.
10. A 12-year-old youth died from injuries sustained during a farm accident. He had received Child Intervention Services within two years of his death. There was minimal child intervention involvement with his family.
11. A 15-year-old youth died as the result of suicide. At the time of his passing, he was in his parents' care. The only involvement of Child Intervention Services was related to his suicide; a Screening was opened to determine if his family required any supports. The youth had no history of mental health concerns or previous suicide attempts.
12. An 18-year-old young man died in a motor vehicle accident. He had received Child Intervention Services within two years of his death. The intervention services were minimal and related to a conflict with his parents that was resolved.
13. A 15-year-old youth with significant medical needs passed away from complications related to cerebral palsy and a seizure disorder. At the time of his death, he was residing in a Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) home and receiving services through FSCD. He had received Child Intervention Services within two years of his death.
14. A 19-year-old young woman died by suicide. She had received Child Intervention Services within two years of her death when there was some involvement with one of her siblings.

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25 A voluntary agreement between Child Intervention Services and a child's guardian intended to address protection concerns while the child remains in the guardian's care.

26 A report completed when a concern is received regarding possible risk to a child as per the *Enhancement Act*.

27 A ten-day initial assessment that occurs to determine whether a child is in need of intervention as per the *Enhancement Act*.

28 An application for a treatment order under s.22.1(1) or 22.2(1) of the *Enhancement Act* may be necessary to obtain the essential treatment that is recommended by a physician or dentist for a child when a guardian or child refuses to consent to essential treatment by a physician or dentist.

29 Courtesy supervision requests are made when distance is an issue for service delivery. The request for courtesy supervision is made to the office that is closest to the child and his or her placement. The courtesy caseworker provides general casework supports that may include contact with the child and/or caregiver.

15. A 17-year-old youth died from complications related to Cystic Fibrosis.[50] At the time of her passing, she was the subject of a Permanent Guardianship Order.
16. A 13-year-old youth passed away due to complications related to her significant medical concerns. She was born with more than one genetic disorder and had a short life expectancy. She had received minimal Child Intervention Services within two years of her death. At the time of her passing, FSCD were involved with her family.
17. A 17-year-old youth died when she was a passenger in a motor vehicle collision. She had received Child Intervention Services within two years of her death. Her most recent involvement was an Enhancement Agreement with Youth.[51] She was living independently and Child Intervention Services ended their involvement after she demonstrated the ability to meet all of her goals.
18. A 12-year-old youth died due to septicemia[52] that had been caused by a small intestinal perforation. The cause of the perforation could not be determined. At the time of his passing, he was in his parents' care. His family had received Child Intervention Services within two years of his death. There was minimal child intervention involvement.
19. A two-month-old infant was found unresponsive while co-sleeping with her mother and passed away. Child Intervention Services had been involved with her family within two years of her death. Child intervention involvement was closed after determining that the infant's mother was connected to a number of community resources and could meet her infant's needs.
20. A 14-year-old youth died due to injuries she received in an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) accident. She had received Child Intervention Services within two years of her death.
21. A seven-year-old boy died due to injuries he received in a motor vehicle accident. At the time of his passing, he was in his parents' care. He had received Child Intervention Services within two years of his death. There was minimal intervention involvement.
22. A three-year-old boy died due to injuries he received in a motor vehicle accident. At the time of his passing, he was in his parents' care. He had received Child Intervention Services within two years of his death. There was minimal intervention involvement.
23. A 19-year-old young man drowned while swimming. He had received Child Intervention Services within two years of his death through a Courtesy Supervision Agreement with another province. Approximately six months prior to his death, the young man ended the intervention involvement because he did not feel he needed any further support.
24. A three-month-old infant died of natural causes related to a genetic condition. She required intensive medical intervention throughout her short life and remained in hospital until she passed away. She and her family had received Child Intervention Services within two years of her death.
25. An eight-month-old infant died as a result of pneumonia. At the time of his passing, he was in his parents' care and the family was receiving Child Intervention Services through a Family Enhancement Agreement.
26. A two-month-old infant died due to undetermined causes. She was born approximately six weeks premature. Her mother found her unresponsive after a nap. At the time of her passing, the infant was in her mother's care and Child Intervention Services was providing support through a Safety Phase Assessment.
27. A five-year-old girl passed away from complications related to an existing medical condition. She had a genetic disorder that resulted in significant developmental delays and medical complications, including cardiac concerns. She and her family had received Child Intervention Services within two years of her death.

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30 An autosomal recessive genetic disorder that affects mostly the lungs Difficulty breathing is the most serious symptom and results from frequent lung infections. There is no cure for Cystic Fibrosis.

31 A voluntary agreement with a youth between the ages of 16 and 18 who is living independently of their guardian to provide supports and financial assistance.

32 Blood poisoning, especially that caused by bacteria or their toxins.

28. A one-year-old infant passed away from undetermined causes. His mother found him unresponsive; it appears that they had been co-sleeping. There had been minimal Child Intervention Services involvement within two years of his death.
29. A four-year-old boy passed away due to accidental blunt force trauma after pulling over a large household item onto himself. His family had received Child Intervention Services within two years of his death.
30. A 12-year-old boy passed away due to injuries he received in a motor vehicle accident. There had been Child Intervention Services involvement within two years of his death.

Closed After Assessment

The following reports were closed after the Assessment phase. This phase involves a review of the Examination phase information; a review of all relevant hard copy files from Alberta Human Services; and contacts with collateral sources. Seven of the following reports were received during 2013-2014, while the remaining four were received during 2014-2015. The reports were closed after the Assessment Phase, as it was determined that there was limited potential for further learning and systemic issues had not been identified.

1. The Advocate received a Report of Serious Injury regarding a six-month-old infant who was admitted to hospital with a skull fracture and a fractured tibia. Prior to these injuries, there was minimal Child Intervention Services involvement. The baby was subsequently apprehended and placed in foster care.
2. A 14-month-old infant was admitted to hospital for a serious infection and subsequently passed away. Prior to his admission to hospital there was no Child Intervention Services involvement. The boy passed away one day after being admitted to hospital, less than 12 hours after Child Intervention Services received a Screening. Medical professionals, police, and Child Intervention Services responded in a coordinated manner.
3. A 16-month-old infant was taken to hospital after suffering a seizure. Prior to her admission to hospital there was no Child Intervention Services involvement. Her mother's explanation regarding the cause of the injury was inconsistent. Child Intervention Services opened a Safety Assessment. The little girl passed away from a head injury. Police were pursuing a criminal investigation.
4. An infant, approximately six months old, was found not breathing and unresponsive while sleeping between his parents on a sofa. There was minimal Child Intervention Services involvement with the family. At the time of his passing, the baby was the subject of a Safety Assessment. Child Intervention Services, the police, and medical professionals responded in a coordinated fashion.
5. A 14-year-old youth was seriously injured in an altercation with peers. He was stabbed and subsequently required hospitalization. He was the subject of a Permanent Guardianship Order at the time of the injury. He was in a shelter at the time, waiting for placement in a group home. He has recovered fully.
6. A one-year-old infant died due to medical complications related to viral hepatitis. At the time of her passing, she was the subject of a Permanent Guardianship Order and living in a kinship care placement.
7. A 16-year-old youth drowned. She had significant disabilities related to Spastic Quadriplegia Cerebral Palsy.[33] At the time of her passing, she was in her parent's care and there was an open Screening. Her family had previously had some involvement with Child Intervention Services and her family was appropriately accessing supports.

33 Spastic Quadriplegia/Quadriparesis is the most severe form of Cerebral Palsy and is often associated with moderate-to-severe intellectual disability. Speaking and being understood are difficult. Seizures can be frequent and hard to control.

8. An eight-month-old infant was taken to hospital after having seizures. It was unclear whether the cause of his condition was due to injury or due to illness related to his premature birth. While his mother struggled as a single parent, she was able to meet the needs of her children through her personal support network, and community supports. At the time of the infant's hospitalization, there was an open Safety Assessment. The infant was expected to make a full recovery with no long-term effects from the seizures.

9. A seven-month-old infant was found unresponsive on the mattress where she had been put to sleep. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) found her cause of death to be undetermined. At the time of her passing, she was in her mother's care and there was an open Safety Assessment. Extensive supports were provided to keep the infant in her mother's care.

10. A three-month-old infant was found unresponsive after being put down for a nap. Attempts to revive her were unsuccessful and she passed away. The OCME found her cause of death to be undetermined. At the time of her passing, she was in the care of her parents and there was an open Safety Assessment. She had been born premature and Child Intervention Services had been providing supports since her birth.

11. A 17-year-old youth died from a suspected drug overdose while residing in a residential facility. At the time of his death, he had dual legal status, a Custody Agreement with Guardian[54] under the *Enhancement Act*, and a voluntary Service Agreement with Youth under *PSECA*. This young person began receiving designated services approximately one year before he died.

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34 A voluntary agreement which allows a parent or guardian to place their child in the care and custody of Child Intervention Services.

2014-2015 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Management's Responsibility for Financial Reporting

The financial statements of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (the "OCYA"), including the performance measures, are the responsibility of the Child and Youth Advocate.

Responsibility for the integrity and objectivity of the financial statements and performance results for the OCYA rests with the Child and Youth Advocate. I oversee the preparation of the OCYA's annual report, including financial statements and performance results. The financial statements and the performance results, of necessity, include amounts that are based on estimates and judgments. The financial statements are prepared in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards. The performance measures are prepared in accordance with the following criteria:

- Reliability – information agrees with underlying data and the sources used to prepare it.
- Understandability and Comparability – current results are presented clearly in accordance with the stated methodology and are comparable with previous results.
- Completeness – performance measures and related targets match those included in the OCYA's 2014-2017 Business Plan.

As Child and Youth Advocate, in addition to program responsibilities, I am responsible for the OCYA's financial administration and reporting functions. The OCYA maintains systems of financial management and internal control which give consideration to costs, benefits, and risks that are designed to:

- provide reasonable assurance that transactions are properly authorized, executed in accordance with prescribed legislation and regulations, and properly recorded so as to maintain accountability of public money;
- provide information to manage and report on performance;
- safeguard the assets and properties of the province under the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate's administration; and
- facilitate preparation of the OCYA's business plan and annual report.

In fulfilling my responsibilities for the OCYA, I have relied, as necessary, on the management of the OCYA.

[Original signed by Del Graff]

Del Graff
Child and Youth Advocate
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

July 22, 2015

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE

Financial Statements

March 31, 2015

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Year ended March 31, 2015

Independent Auditor's Report

Statement of Operations

Statement of Financial Position

Statement of Cash Flows

Notes to the Financial Statements

Schedule 1 – Expenses – Directly Incurred Detailed by Object

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Schedule 3 – Salary and Benefits Disclosures

Schedule 4 – Related Party Transactions

Schedule 5 – Allocated Costs

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Members of the Legislative Assembly

Report on the Financial Statements

I have audited the accompanying financial statements of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2015, and the statements of operations and cash flows for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

My responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on my audit. I conducted my audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that I comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

Opinion

In my opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate as at March 31, 2015, and the results of its operations, its remeasurement gains and losses, and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

[Original signed by Merwan N. Saher FCPA, FCA]

Auditor General

July 22, 2015

Edmonton, Alberta

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS
Year Ended March 31, 2015

	2015		2014
	Budget	Actual	Actual
Revenues			
Other Revenue	$ -	$ 3,126	$ 436
Total Revenues	$ -	$ 3,126	$ 436
Expenses - Directly Incurred (Note 2b and Schedules 1 and 2)			
Programs			
Child and Youth Advocate's Office	$ 844,000	$ 690,867	$ 668,824
Child and Youth Advocacy	3,321,000	2,994,514	2,959,320
Legal Representation for Children and Youth	4,080,000	4,229,798	4,564,109
Quality Assurance and Investigations	1,042,000	1,138,783	785,890
Systemic Advocacy and Stakeholder Relations	1,375,000	1,316,727	1,266,318
Strategic Support	2,134,000	2,273,654	1,795,278
Total Expenses	$ 12,796,000	$ 12,644,343	$ 12,039,739
Net Operating Results	$ (12,796,000)	$ (12,641,217)	$ (12,039,303)

The accompanying notes and schedules are part of these financial statements.

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
As at March 31, 2015

	2015	2014
Assets		
Prepaid Expenses	$ 5,636	$ 1,775
Accounts Receivable	1,287	-
Tangible Capital Assets (Note 3)	622,461	784,552
	$ 629,384	$ 786,327
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	2,776,740	2,681,777
Accrued Vacation Pay	744,648	656,258
	$ 3,521,388	$ 3,338,035
Net Liabilities		
Net Liabilities at Beginning of Year	$ (2,551,708)	$ (1,572,233)
Net Operating Results	(12,641,217)	(12,039,303)
Net Financing Provided from General Revenues	12,300,921	11,059,828
Net Liabilities at End of Year	$ (2,892,004)	$ (2,551,708)
	$ 629,384	$ 786,327

The accompanying notes and schedules are part of these financial statements.

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
Year Ended March 31, 2015

	2015	2014
Operating Transactions		
Net Operating Results	$ (12,641,217)	$ (12,039,303)
Non-Cash Items included in Net Operating Results:		
Amortization of Tangible Capital Assets	236,679	214,242
Valuation Adjustments	88,390	71,824
	(12,316,148)	(11,753,237)
(Increase) in Accounts Receivable	(1,287)	-
(Increase)/Decrease in Prepaid Expenses	(3,861)	4,316
Increase in Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	94,963	713,273
Cash Applied to Operating Transactions	(12,226,333)	(11,035,648)
Capital Transactions		
Acquisition of Tangible Capital Assets	(74,588)	(24,180)
Cash Applied to Capital Transactions	(74,588)	(24,180)
Financing Transactions		
Net Financing Provided from General Revenues	12,300,921	11,059,828
	12,300,921	11,059,828
Increase in Cash	-	-
Cash at Beginning of Year	-	-
Cash at End of Year	$ -	$ -

The accompanying notes and schedules are part of these financial statements.

NOTE 1 AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (the Office) operates under the authority of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* which was proclaimed on April 1, 2012. The net cost of the operations of the Office is borne by the General Revenue Fund of the Province of Alberta. Annual operating budgets are approved by the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

The Office represents the rights, interests and viewpoints of children and youth who receive designated services under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* and the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act,* and youth involved with the youth criminal justice system.

NOTE 2 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND REPORTING PRACTICES

These financial statements are prepared in accordance with Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards.

(a) Reporting Entity

The reporting entity is the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, which is a Legislative Office and for which the Child and Youth Advocate is accountable.

The Office operates within the General Revenue Fund (the Fund). The Fund is administered by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. All cash receipts of the Office are deposited into the Fund and all cash disbursements made by the Office are paid from the Fund. Net financing provided from General Revenues is the difference between all cash receipts and all cash disbursements made.

(b) Basis of Financial Reporting

Revenue
All revenues are reported on the accrual basis of accounting. Cash received for which goods or services have not been provided by year end is recorded as deferred revenue.

Expenses
Directly Incurred
Directly Incurred expenses are those costs the Office has primary responsibility and accountability for, as reflected in the Offices of the Legislative Assembly budget documents.

NOTE 2 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND REPORTING PRACTICES (continued)

(b) Basis of Financial Reporting (continued)

Expenses – Directly Incurred (continued)
In addition to program operating expenses such as salaries, supplies, etc., directly incurred expenses also include:

- amortization of tangible capital assets,
- pension costs, which are the cost of employer contributions for current service of employees during the year, and
- valuation adjustments represent the change in management's estimate of future payments arising from obligations relating to vacation pay.

Incurred by Others
Services contributed by other entities in support of the Office's operations are not recognized and are disclosed in Schedule 4 and allocated to programs in Schedule 5.

Assets
Financial assets are assets that could be used to discharge existing liabilities or finance future operations and are not for consumption in the normal course of operations. Financial assets of the Office are limited to financial claims, such as advances to and receivables from other organizations, employees and other individuals.

Assets acquired by right are not included.

Tangible capital assets of the Office are recorded at historical cost and amortized on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives of the assets. The threshold for capitalizing new systems development is $250,000 and the threshold for major systems enhancements is $100,000. The threshold for all other tangible capital assets is $5,000.

Amortization is only charged if the tangible capital asset is in use.

Liabilities
Liabilities are recorded to the extent that they represent present obligations as a result of events and transactions occurring prior to the end of the fiscal year. The settlement of liabilities will result in sacrifice of economic benefits in the future.

NOTE 2 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND REPORTING PRACTICES (continued)

(b) Basis of Financial Reporting (continued)

Valuation of Financial Assets and Liabilities
Fair value is the amount of consideration agreed upon in an arm's length transaction between knowledgeable, willing parties who are under no compulsion to act.

The fair values of Accounts Receivable, and Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities are estimated to approximate their carrying values because of the short term nature of these instruments.

Net Liabilities
Net Liabilities represent the difference between the carrying value of assets held by the Office and its liabilities.

Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards require a "net debt" presentation for the statement of financial position in the summary financial statements of governments. Net debt presentation reports the difference between financial assets and liabilities as "net debt" or "net financial assets" as an indicator of the future revenues required to pay for past transactions and events. The Office operates within the government reporting entity, and does not finance all its expenditures by independently raising revenues. Accordingly, these financial statements do not report a net debt indicator.

(c) Financial Instruments

As the Office does not have any transactions involving financial instruments that are classified in the fair value category and has no foreign currency transactions, there are no remeasurement gains and losses and a statement of remeasurement gains and losses has not been presented.

(d) Future Accounting Changes

In March 2015 the Public Sector Accounting Board issued PS 2200 – Related party disclosures and PS 3420 – Inter-entity related party transactions. These accounting standards are effective for fiscal years starting on or after April 1, 2017.

- PS 2200 – Related party disclosures defines a related party and identifies disclosures for related parties and related party transactions, including key management personnel and close family members.
- PS 3420 – Inter-entity transactions, establishes standards on how to account for and report transactions between public sector entities that comprise a government's reporting entity from both a provider and recipient perspective.

Management does not expect the implementation of these standards to have a significant impact on the financial statements.

NOTE 3 TANGIBLE CAPITAL ASSETS

	Office Furniture & Equipment	Computer Hardware	Computer Software	2014-15 Total
Estimated Useful Life	3 and 5 years	3 years	3 and 5 years	
Historical Costs				
Beginning of Year	$ 56,289	$ 123,408	$1,440,982	$1,620,679
Additions	7,217	43,303	24,068	74,588
	$ 63,506	$ 166,711	$1,465,050	$1,695,267
Accumulated Amortization				
Beginning of Year	$ 21,446	$ 25,534	$ 789,147	$ 836,127
Amortization Expense	9,017	40,892	186,770	236,679
	$ 30,463	$ 66,426	$ 975,917	$1,072,806
Net Book value at March 31, 2015	$ 33,043	$ 100,285	$ 489,133	$ 622,461
Net Book value at March 31, 2014	$ 34,843	$ 97,874	$ 651,835	$ 784,552

NOTE 4 CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS

Contractual obligations are obligations of the Office to others that will become liabilities in the future when the terms of the contracts or agreements are met.

As at March 31, 2015, the Office has the following contractual obligations:

	2015	2014
Obligations under Operating Leases	$ 28,301	$ 7,331
Obligations under Contracts	515,918	198,943
	$ 544,219	$ 206,274

Estimated payment requirements for the unexpired terms of these contractual obligations are as follows:

	Total
2015-16	$ 527,629
2016-17	11,711
2017-18	4,879
	$ 544,219

NOTE 5 BENEFIT PLANS

The Office participates in the multi-employer pension plans: Management Employees Pension Plan, Public Service Pension Plan and Supplementary Retirement Plan for Public Service Managers. The expense for these pension plans is equivalent to the annual contributions of $954,191 for the year ended March 31, 2015 (2014 - $848,795). The Office is not responsible for future funding of the plan deficit other than through contribution increases.

At December 31, 2014, the Management Employees Pension Plan reported a surplus of $75,805,000 (2013 – Surplus $50,457,000), the Public Service Pension Plan reported a deficiency of $803,299,000 (2013 - deficiency $1,254,678,000), and the Supplementary Retirement Plan for Public Service Managers reported a deficiency of $17,203,000 (2013 – deficiency $12,384,000).

The Office also participates in a multi-employer Long Term Disability Income Continuance Plan. At March 31, 2015, the Management, Opted Out and Excluded Plan reported an actuarial surplus of $32,343,000 (2014 – surplus $24,055,000). The expense for this plan is limited to the employer's annual contributions for the year.

NOTE 6 APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The financial statements were approved by the Senior Financial Officer and the Child and Youth Advocate.

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE **Schedule 1**
SCHEDULE TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
EXPENSES - DIRECTLY INCURRED DETAILED BY OBJECT
Year ended March 31, 2015

	2015		2014
	Budget	Actual	Actual
Salaries, Wages and Employee Benefits	$ 7,115,000	$ 6,778,547	$ 6,238,300
Supplies and Services	5,440,000	5,629,117	5,587,197
Amortization of Tangible Capital Assets	241,000	236,679	214,242
Total Expenses	$ 12,796,000	$ 12,644,343	$ 12,039,739

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE
SCHEDULE TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
LAPSE/ENCUMBRANCE
Year ended March 31, 2015

Schedule 2

	2015				
	Voted Estimate [1]	Supplementary Estimate [2]	Adjusted Voted Estimate	Actual [3]	Unexpended (Over Expended)
Program - Operational					
Child and Youth Advocate's Office	$ 785,000	$ -	$ 785,000	$ 653,598	$ 131,402
Child and Youth Advocacy	3,315,000	(134,000)	3,181,000	3,001,115	179,885
Legal Representation for Children and Youth	4,086,000	-	4,086,000	4,213,995	(127,995)
Quality Assurance and Investigations	1,025,000	599,000	1,624,000	1,118,943	505,057
Systemic Advocacy and Stakeholder Relations	1,371,000	143,000	1,514,000	1,298,298	215,702
Strategic Support	1,845,000	22,000	1,867,000	2,033,323	(166,323)
Total	$ 12,427,000	$ 630,000	$ 13,057,000	$ 12,319,272	$ 737,728
Lapse					$ 737,728
Program - Capital					
Strategic Support	$ 75,000	$ 100,000	$ 175,000	$ 74,588	$ 100,412
Total	$ 75,000	$ 100,000	$ 175,000	$ 74,588	$ 100,412
Lapse					$ 100,412

(1) As per Voted Expenses and Capital Investment by Program of 2014-15 Offices of the Legislative Assembly Estimates.
(2) Per the Supplementary Supply Estimate approved on March 19, 2015
(3) Actuals exclude non-voted amounts such as amortization and valuation adjustments.

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE
SCHEDULE TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
SALARY AND BENEFITS DISCLOSURE
Year Ended March 31, 2015

Schedule 3

	2015				2014
	Base Salary [1]	Other Cash Benefits [2]	Other Non-Cash Benefits [3]	Total	Total
Senior Official					
Child and Youth Advocate [4]	$ 243,672	$ -	$ 56,895	$ 300,567	$ 297,824
Executive Director					
Executive Director, Child and Youth Advocacy	144,494	-	40,136	184,630	178,393
Total	$ 388,166	$ -	$ 97,031	$ 485,197	$ 476,217

(1) Base salary includes regular salary and earnings.
(2) Other cash benefits include lump sum payments. There were no bonuses paid in 2015.
(3) Other non-cash benefits include the Office's share of all employee benefits and contributions or payments made on behalf of employees including pension, supplementary retirement plans, health care, health spending account, dental coverage, group life insurance, short and long term disability plans, professional memberships and tuition fees.
(4) Automobile provided, no dollar amount included in other non-cash benefits.

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE
SCHEDULE TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS
Year ended March 31, 2015

Schedule 4

Related parties are those entities consolidated or accounted for on the modified equity basis in the Government of Alberta's financial statements. Related parties also include key management personnel in the Office.

The Office and its employees paid or collected certain taxes and fees set by regulation for premiums, licences and other charges. These amounts were incurred in the normal course of business, reflect charges applicable to all users, and have been excluded from this schedule.

The Office had the following transactions with related parties recorded on the Statement of Operations and the Statement of Financial Position at the amount of consideration agreed upon between the related parties:

	Other Entities	
	2015	2014
Expenses - Directly Incurred		
Other Services	$ 73,684	$ 38,745
Total	$ 73,684	$ 38,745

The Office also had the following transactions with related parties for which no consideration was exchanged. The amounts for these related party transactions are estimated based on the costs incurred by the service provider to provide the service. These amounts are not recorded in the financial statements but are disclosed in Schedule 5.

	Other Entities	
	2015	2014
Expenses - Incurred by Others		
Accommodation	$ 493,834	$ 339,019
Information Technology	-	203,423
Total	$ 493,834	$ 542,442

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE
SCHEDULE TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
ALLOCATED COSTS
Year Ended March 31, 2015

Schedule 5

	2015			2014
Program	Expenses [a]	Expenses - Incurred by Others Accomodation Costs [b]	Total Expenses	Total Expenses
Child and Youth Advocate's Office	$ 690,867	$ 24,692	$ 715,559	$ 686,667
Child and Youth Advocacy	2,994,514	189,303	3,183,817	3,139,228
Legal Representation for Children and Youth	4,229,798	32,922	4,262,720	4,748,096
Quality Assurance and Investigations	1,138,783	57,614	1,196,397	815,628
Systemic Advocacy and Stakeholder Relations	1,316,727	74,075	1,390,802	1,314,016
Strategic Support	2,273,654	115,228	2,388,882	1,878,546
Operations	$ 12,644,343	$ 493,834	$ 13,138,177	$ 12,582,181

(a) Expenses - Directly incurred as per Statement of Operations.
(b) Costs shown for Accomodation (include grants in lieu of taxes) on Schedule 4, allocated by square footage.

"Using an advocate reminds me of a saying my mom used to say 'when professionals start knocking, people start talking.' The advocate is that professional and when they knock people pay attention."

~ Logan

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